comb your hands through my hair and tell me that you love me
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by lightning_anon

Summary

Technoblade's parents were the best of parents: kind, caring, and loving. Technoblade's parents were the worst of people: unforgiving, cruel, deadly.

Techno loses his parents, his hair, and his autonomy. He gains a Phil, and a family. Just not in the way he wanted.

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Techno's encompass installment: a story of what we lose and what we gain.

clean your hands

Chapter Summary

Techno meets Phil, and doesn't even get to say goodbye to his parents.

Chapter Notes

CW: ableism, ABA rhetoric, meltdowns, unconsentual body modification, discussion of terrorism, eugenics, discussion of who does/doesn't deserve life, biting, unitentional self harm, distressed children, death penalty (mention), general shittiness of the foster system

All Technblade wants is to go home. This is not home. This is a random house that Techno knows nothing about. They're parked in front of the house now and Technoblade firmly pushes his hands down in a sharp motion, doing his best to stim away everything wrong with this entire situation.

His social worker looks over at him, and grabs his hands, bringing them to his lap firmly.

"Quiet hands," she reminds.

Technoblade screeches and looks out the window, turning as far away from her as he can.

She huffs.

"Technoblade," she reprimands. And God does his name sound so foreign coming out of her mouth. So wrong. She says it odd, like it's a mouthful she can't quite swallow.

He gets it okay, his name is weird. But his parents gave it to him and they loved it and they loved him and he loves it and them as well.

Is it weird that he never wants to hear his name again?

"Look, I know you get bad with change and misbehave. But this is only going to be for a few days so please just work with me here and be good, okay?"

Technoblade huffs at her ignorance. She acts like he misbehaves on purpose, refusing to recognize that his deemed 'misbehavior' are his neurodivergent traits appearing in full force

as a result of overstimulation or his own way of adjusting and processing what's going on around him.

It's incredibly wrong, and stupid.

The foster system is incredibly ableist. Technoblade hates it.

He tries to drag his fingers through his hair, feeling the thickness of it and how silky smooth it is.

But he can't, because it's not there.

At the realization he almost starts crying.

His first foster placement were the ones to get him the haircut. He didn't want it. They had done it anyway. Now, the longest it was was a few inches at the top, the sides had been buzzed. He hates it.

"Technoblade," his social worker calls.

He follows her to the door of the house anyway, because he doesn't have a choice. And he really doesn't want this but she's already grabbing hold of him and dragging him to the door.

So he grabs his bag- thankfully a duffel. He's already noticed most kids have trash bags, but he's been able to hang onto his duffle so far. He's been told the older kids will probably take it from him. Being eleven kind of sucks. He's too old to get away with the things the little kids can, but not old enough that he doesn't get picked on.

The lady knocks on the door and it opens to a man, smiling. His teeth glint in the sunlight, and all Technoblade can be reminded of is a predator ready for their next meal. He already doesn't like it here.

He wants to go home. He wants his mom and dad. But instead he's stuck here.

He zones out for most of whatever his social worker and the man talks about. He doesn't listen, not because he doesn't want to, it can just be really hard for him to pay attention sometimes. His parents got that. They understood his ADHD. They'd help him focus when he wanted, and understood when he just wasn't able.

Instead of listening, he studies the rooms, noting where everything is.

He's particularly interested in the wall in the living room with a large bookcase, scattered with books. A lot of people don't actually have books on their bookcases. Technoblade's parents did. This man has books too. A lot of them.

At least he has some redeeming qualities.

One redeeming quality.

He turns in his chair to peer at some of the spines. Trying to catch their names from a distance. He can't quite make any of them out.

"Technoblade, Technoblade," his social worker insists.

Technoblade scowls, but gives her his attention. He listens as he continues to look around.

She huffs.

"Technoblade doesn't have very good attention," she explains, "he has ADHD and autism-"

"I am autistic," Technoblade buts in, "I don't-"

"Technoblade, don't interrupt," she says.

"Now, wait, what were you saying?" Phil asks, peering at him. Technoblade does his best to avoid his gaze.

"I am autistic. I have ADHD. I don't have autism."

"What do you mean?" Phil asks. Technoblade like how he asks. Lots of people ask questions with weird tones and faces and Technoblade is pretty sure they're being mean but he can't usually tell. But Phil says this sentence the same way as anything else he's said so far and Technoblade is pretty sure it's a good thing.

"It's uh," Technoblade says, and tries to recall what he was told by his parents. "It's person first language versus identity first," he says.

"Autistic people- we like identity first because uhm- well because autism plays a big role in my identity! I'm not myself without it. Autism is part of who I am. You can't separate me from my autism.

"People with ADHD more commonly used people first, but honestly I don't mind either. But autistic is definitely identify first," he explains.

Phil nods along, and Technoblade thinks he might actually get it. Technoblade perks up and does little wiggles in his seat. Since he was taken from his parents, no other adults have been understanding like them. Could Phil be the first?

"Technoblade," the lady scolds, "we talked about this. You are stronger than your autism. And please at least try to sit still."

Technoblade instantly bristles. God does she even speak before she speaks? What is this ableist bullshit?

"Correct me if I'm wrong," Phil says, "but it seems like- it seems like autism isn't something to overcome, more than it is a fact of life, a part of it."

Technoblade meets Phil's eyes just for a millisecond. He has to judge if they're genuine.

He's surprised by the sincerity he finds buried there, and gives a short nod. Maybe this really can be different then the other two group homes he's been in.

It probably won't though.

He rubs a hand against his hair, pushing against the odd sharpness of the buzzed sides. He hates that it's short, but at least the fresh buzz is a good stim.

He sits like that, rubbing his shirt hair back and forth and humming as he zones out on whatever subject Phil and his social worker are on.

It's a good stim, but he still really wishes he had his old hair back.

Phil really comments on his hair after about a month of living together. It was only supposed to be a few days, but Technoblade and Phil just… sort of clicked and his social worker didn't see a reason to separate them right now. Eventually they would find a better, more permanent placement for Technoblade, but it was tough going.

Turns out not a lot of people wanted an autistic son of terrorists.

"Your hair grows fast," he mentions, "the sides were shaved when you got here."

Technoblade nods. This is an accurate observation of the occurrences.

"Let me know if you want it cut again," Phil says, before turning back to his book.

Technoblade freezes, worst fears being materialized right in front of him. He's going to get his hair cut again. It's never going to be long again. He'll never pull it up, never braid. He… He doesn't want to cut it.

Ever.

Never again.

"No," Technoblade says abruptly. Phil looks back up from his book.

"No?" he asks, tilting his head slightly. If Technoblade wasn't so panicked, he wonders if he would have noticed Phil's genuine confusion. Probably not, Technoblade's always been bad at reading people, and confusion his the emotion he understands the least when presented with it's physical signs.

"No," Technoblade says, "No. No no no no. You can't make me!" He's shouting by the end of his words.

"Woah, Technoblade," Phil says, "Hey let's talk-"

"No!" Technoblade screams and races away to his room. He slams the door shut behind him, leaning his back against it and sliding down to the floor.

He heaves numerous breaths, pulling his knees up and shoving his head in them as he covers his head with his arms.

He sobs more, screaming.

He knows what this is, a meltdown. That doesn't make it any easier to deal with. Especially not alone.

With his parents, they'd always help him. Space, holding him, a weight blanket, stim toys, whatever he needed.

He doesn't have any of that here.

He doesn't have his hair, and he doesn't have his parents.

He screams and slams his back against the door.

"Mom!" he calls out, desperate, "Dad!"

Of course, neither of them appear.

"Mom!" he screams again, voice breaking at the volume, "Dad! Mom! Dad! Please, please, please. I need you," he whines, curling in on himself as he continues sobbing so hard he can't even breathe.

He gasps for breath around sharp tears.

He doesn't have the air to scream anymore so he settles for whimpers and whines.

"Mommy," he cries, "Daddy, I miss you."

He feels a pressure on his back.

He keeps heaving, unable to get air.

Then suddenly, everything changes. His sobs cut off abruptly. He grabs his arms, pulling them tight and gripping his nails into his arms. That isn't enough so he pulls his head up slightly, biting his wrist instead.

He grips down hard, firm, and pain explodes in his wrist. It's much better than the pain inside of him, so he keeps biting.

The pressure continues to build within him, and it takes him much too long to realize that there is an actual physical pressure, and not just the one on his chest.

The door continues to push on his back, and a few moments later, it starts to move, slowly moving Technoblade across the room with it.

He lets out a small squeak of surprise, and scrambles away, hand still in mouth.

Phil stands in the doorway, own tear tracks down his face and he immediately drops to his knees in front of Technoblade.

"Technoblade," he says, voice breaking over the single word.

They stare at each other for a brief moment.

Phil's not his dad, not even close. But he's all Technoblade has right now. He scrambles over, bowling into Phil, and Phil instantly wraps him up in his arms.

"I've got you," he whispers.

Technoblade believes him.

Phil wants to talk to him about what happened later. Technoblade anxiously combs his hand through his still much to short hair.

"I- that didn't seem fun," Phil starts off.

Technoblade nods.

"Does that happen to you often?" He then broaches. Technoblade appreciates the bluntness, even if Phil is obviously uncomfortable with the conversation.

At least he's trying. Techin couldn't say the same about the group home.

"Sometimes," Technoblade mumbles, drawing circles on his knee, "depends. They're called meltdowns. They're an autism thing. Though my ADHD plays into it too."

His ADHD and autism are so intertwined he often doesn't know where one ends and the other begins. Sure meltdowns are an autistic experience but they can be triggered by ADHD responses to stimuli. It's all connected.

"Can you- if you- Techno would you be willing to explain that more for me? So I can understand better and help in the ways you need?"

Technoblade jerks his head up. There's a lot of interesting things Phil said there. Most importantly…

"What did you call me? Technoblade asks.

Phil instantly responds.

"I'm sorry," he apologizes immediately, "it just slipped out. I won't call you that if you don't want me to."

"Techno," Technoblade repeats. It has a nice ring to it, shorter than his full name, but longer than any of the nicknames his parents used to call him.

"Techno," he repeats again, "Techno, Techno, Techno."

He stops with the word, testing it out by rolling it around in his tongue to figure out if it's right. Phil just observes.

Eventually, Technoblade- Techno nods

"I like that. Call me that please. Not Technoblade."

"No Technoblade at all?" Phil asks.

Techno considers, and then gives a firm nod.

That's his parents name for him. If he can't hold onto them, he at least wants to hold onto that.

Techno's parents go on trial when he's twelve two months apart. He's still living with Phil, the intended few days extending into a few weeks and continuing through the months as they slip together.

He gets court summons in the mail, and from there on it's a shit show.

He knows how court is supposed to work. He's supposed to go to the court, tell the truth, and then let them decide. And if he tells the truth the jury will rule with justice and… and things will work out for good.

Techno knows how court is supposed to work. He also knows that court doesn't work the way it's supposed to. It's one of the things his parents had talked about lot, one of he reasons they took justice into their own hands.

Both sides want him to testify in their favor. How can he testify in favor? Isn't he supposed to tell facts, not opinions? It's the jury's job to decide who he favors.

It's a lot to think about.

Either way, he's testifying.

It'll be Phil who takes him to court, joined by his social worker.

Techno had been looking forward to it, in all honesty. He wanted to see his parents. He hasn't seen them in over a year. But his social worker had said that Techno wasn't allowed to be alone with them and wouldn't be talking to them outside of anything the court needed.

Techno thought that was stupid.

He just wanted his parents back.

But at least he got to see them. And he wanted to look good. So he put on his nice suit with a new bowtie that Phil had gotten him. It was a clip one, which was nice. Techno liked tie bow ties but sometimes they got restrictive and tight and it wasn't a good sensory experience. But this one had a collar that wrapped around his neck and could be adjusted, but was able to clip at both ends.

Much easier to take off if Techno needed to.

It was also a bright red, his dad's favorite color

He did his bowtie for his dad and he was trying to do his hair tie for his mom.

They both had long hair, and his mom had always done his. Long fingers- piano fingers- stroking through his hair and dividing it into pieces, twisting, weaving, forming a masterpiece. Techno's hair became art in her hands.

It was finally long enough to braid again, and so Techno attempted to do it himself.

He found himself quickly failing, fingers tangled in knot ridden hair and tears in his eyes.

Which was how Phil found him.

"Hey Techno, 'bout ready to- oh."

Techno sobs louder.

"Okay, okay kiddo," Phil soothes, stepping onto the room.

Techno pulls his hands out of his hair, holding them in tight fists at his sides.

He heaves out a frustrated breath. It's loud, filling the room. He wens to tell Phil, explain his anger, but he quickly realizes all of his words are gone, leaving him.

Realizing he's nonverbal only adds to his frustration.

At least Techno knows Phil won't get mad at him for being nonverbal. It's happened more then a few times in the almost year that Techno has been here.

"Were you trying to braid your hair?" Phil asks, looking at the disarray that is the bathroom.

Techno nods miserably.

Phil hesitates, checks his watch on his wrist.

"Want me to help?" he offers.

Techno's instant response is to tell him no.

The only people who have touched his hair in good ways were his parents. Kids at school used to pull at it until his parents pulled him out of the setting all together.

And in the foster system, he lost the length all together.

Over a foot of hair… gone.

Techno didn't want Phil to touch his hair, didn't want him to ruin it.

But he also wants a braid. It's the first time he's seeing his parents in months.

He nods, because he doesn't think he can talk right now. He accepts Phil's offer, and holds out the brush.

Phil takes it, and then sets it on the counter to pull out his phone.

Techno watches him type in the word 'braid.'

It's the techno realizes Phil has no idea how to braid. At all.

Techno makes grabby hands for Phil's phone, still unable to talk. He quickly opens the notes app.

'You don't know how to braid hair, do you?' Techno types out.

Phil looks to the side.

"Are you nonverbal?"

Techno nods, and points back at his question.

"Uh, no," he admits.

Techno sighs and types some more

'I'll tell you how,' Techno writes, 'I can teach you. I just need some help with the execution.'

Phil nods. Good.

Techno begins. He scraps the braid he had been going for, knowing that Phil can't learn to french braid in 10 minutes, rather hoping he can pick up a twist braid. It's a struggle at the beginning with Phil trying to learn while Techno is non verbal and typing through a phone, but they get a rhythm going eventually.

Somewhat.

Maybe?

"I thought braids had three strands?" Phil asks, confused as he holds clumps of Techno's hair. He holds the strands limply, , a blank expression on his face, and Techno can't help but snort at how lost he looks.

'This braid doesn't,' is all Techno elaborates, and then continues with his explanation.

The braid is messy when it's finished, numerous strands out of place. It's too loose in areas, and a bit tight in others and it's starting to unravel a bit.

Techno is about to face his parents with short hair and a sloppy twist braid.

But Phil looks so proud, Techno can't even hate him for it.

Techno looks at himself in the mirror, tries to harden his face.

'Okay,' he says, 'Let's go.'

"Yeah?" Phil offers.

Techno nods, his hair moving with him. A loose strand falls into his hair, and he can't help but grin at how awful it is.

Turns out, he's going to be staying with Phil for a while. His parents' trials are long, and tedious, and they aren't going away anytime soon.

Techno doesn't know how a lot of the logistics work, just that he's not allowed to be with them. They're not in prison, not yet- because his father will almost certainly go- but he still isn't allowed to live with them.

Which makes sense, Techno guesses, but he doesn't like it.

His parents, his parents are good parents. But everyone around him is telling him they're bad people.

But Techno's parents read to him, and when Techno started to read himself they gave him an entire library. When they fought, they talked it out, sat down and had discussions.

His dad and him baked together, his mom taught him to cook. They taught him about his autism, his ADHD, and how they were essential parts of who he was, but also parts he'd be persecuted for.

They pulled him out of public school when he was bullied and mistreated and took an entire semester's worth of classes to teach him themselves.

They always offered to get him into social events so he could make friends, but respected his boundaries when he didn't stray past the book club he had fallen in love with.

They were good parents.

And all Techno hears is the adults talking about how bad they were.

He's gotten quite sick of it.

Is after another day of court that it comes to head.

It's not even court that was frustrating, Techno wasn't even allowed to be around for a lot of it.

It had been after, when his social worker had made a comment to Phil.

"It's better he's with you now, instead of them. Let's just hope it's not too late for him," she had said. Techno remembers it word for word. It makes something furious burn inside him.

He's never felt so angry.

Techno's never really been an angry child if anything, he's too soft.

Back in elementary school when he got bullied he got shoved around and never hit back. His parents commended him for his nonviolent approach, of using his words instead, but they had also worried that he hadn't defeneded himself.

Techno had never been an angry child, or a violent one.

That was about to change.

He stormed right over to his social worker, who probably thought he hadn't been able to hear her from a distance, and kicked her in the shin.

"Ow! Technoblade!" she immediately reprimands, loud and shrill. Techno winces at the noise. He goes to retreat but before he can, she reaches out, grabbing a hold of him.

She grabs him by his hair.

Techno sees red.

He screeches, twisting and turning until he sees her hand attached to his hair. The closest thing to it is his mouth.

Without a second though, he leans forward, sinks his teeth into her flesh and bites.

She yelps, letting go of his hair in her shock and Techno takes the moment to dart away a good thirty feet.

She grips her wrist, and she isn't bleeding- Techno doesn't even think he broke the skin. It's still going to hurt.

Phil stands between the two of them, caught in a battle he has no idea what to do with.

"What the fuck!" his social worker swears, and takes a few steps toward him.

His social workers have never been great, never been nice. But she's mostly been ignorant and ableist, disrespectful and the like.

But right now, she's scary. Techno is genuinely scared of her. He flinches back.

Phil blocks her path.

"I'll talk to him," he promises, "he'll know that isn't okay. It's been a long day, for us all, yeah?"

She still glares, and looks down at her arm.

Techno's even more thankful he avoided breaking her skin.

She glares at him, then looks back at Phil.

"I'll be giving you a call later to discuss this," she announces, and then storms off.

Techno breathes a sigh of relief.

Phil turns to him and he almost flinches again. There's fire like Techno's never seen in his eyes.

"Let's go home," Phil suggests.

Techno nods, and tries not to wince at the fact that Phil's house probably won't be his home for that much longer.

"Techno," Phil says when they get home, "you can't bite people."

Techno hangs his head.

"But I know you know that," Phil says, "so why did you?"

"She touched my hair," Techno says.

"Okay, that still doesn't-"

"She grabbed my hair," Techno repeats, "and she thinks my parents were bad people. And she doesn't want me to go back to them. She thinks my dad deserves the death penalty, I heard her talking about it once. And she thinks I'm a bad kid. The only reason she's giving me a chance is because she thinks me being autistic makes me too dumb to be evil like my parents. So I kicked her. And then she grabbed my hair, and so I bit her."

Phil blinks.

Techno grips his hands. He's not backing down from this. Maybe he shouldn't have bit her, but she shouldn't have done anything she did.

But maybe, maybe Phil gets that. Maybe he really is different. Maybe he'll hear Techno's side.

"That's not okay," Phil says.

Techno wilts. All the hope he had in Phil disappears.

"That's absolutely not okay. I'll be calling her right away."

"I'm not apologizing!" Techno protests immediately.

"What?" Phil asks.

Techno refuses to repeat himself.

"Techno," Phil says slowly, "I'm not asking you to apologize. We will have to talk about the kicking and biting again, but I'm calling your social worker to get this figured out. How she treated you is unacceptable, and I'll be making sure this is resolved. If needed, I'll also push to see if you can get a new social worker. This is unacceptable."

Techno blinks. Phil's mad at his social worker, not him?

Techno voices his thoughts.

"Yes," Phil agrees, "yes I am. I am a bit disappointed you acted violently, because this is an issue that could have been resolved with words and with speaking to me, but I understand you felt like you couldn't come to me. We can talk about that as well. I want you to know and feel comfortable telling me anything. Always."

Techno nods.

It'll be hard. But Phil defended him, so Techno can at least throw him a bone, right?

He starts opening up a bit more, letting Phil in. He shares about school mostly.

School is hard. Techno never really has fit in.

He was homeschooled with his parents. But Phil's job doesn't let him do that. Even if it did, Phil would have to take classes to get certified. By the time he does that, Techno should be back with his parents.

Should be. Hopefully.

The trials really aren't looking great.

His dad- well it's not a question of if anymore, just if he'll be facing 20, 40, life or whatever. Techno, well Techno's still trying to come to terms with the fact that he might not ever see him again.

It's not something he's particularly okay with.

But even if Phil was certified and had the time, the stupid foster system says it's important for Techno to be in a 'normal environment' to support all the 'uncertainty in his life during these hard times.'

It's fucking bullshit in his mindset.

Public school has never really worked for Techno.

First off, the actual building, Most of them were built horribly with mold and rat piss that gave Techno headaches. They all had the bright floresencants that made him blink and look away. But all he could look at were the linoleum floors that reflected the light right back at him, blinding him once more. And the walls- well the walls were the worst. Noise echoed and vibrated everything off of them, keeping a steady ringing that drove into Techno's skull, making it impossible to think. And the walls all had different colors and murals and posters.

Some of the murals were cool, but most were just a mess of distracting color that built an built and become overwhelming.

Techno had never been they hyper ADHD stereotype. He was inattentive type all the way, and he always felt like stupid school walls brought out that side of him the most.

But the building wasn't where the hate ended, just where it started.

Next were the people, and there were four different tiers. Staff, teachers, students, and parents. Parents, whenever they got involved, were always the worst. Techno had sat in offices too many times while parents defended their child's ableism and stared at Techno like he was some type of zoo exhibit.

The next worse were the staff. The ones that didn't know him, but knew of him, cooed at him. They coddled him, treated him like he was a toddler because they knew his diagnosis and situation, but not him.

Then were the staff that didn't know him at all. They were unsympathetic, unmoving, and didn't care for his situation. At least Techno could usually avoid those ones. But the staff that knew him personally were almost always the worst. They were the ones who got mad at him for things he couldn't control. The true ableism came out when they spoke to him, complaining of inconveniences when Techno demanded accommodation.

God neurotypucal people were so stupid.

Then were the students. A lot of the okay adults in Techno's life had always been worried about school bullies. And sure, Techno had faced many, but most were decades older than him. The bullying that came from his peers was much more subtle. Not wanting to sit next to him, groaning when they were placed in a group with him. Girls who spoke to him in a high pitched voice, deskmates who complained or laughed at him when he stimmed by humming or repeating words of lectures softly beneath his breath. Much like the staff he didn't know, Techno's saving grace was that he could usually ignore his fellow students.

When you get the reputation as the loner, disabled kid with a fucked up family and life to boot, people tend to leave you alone. Techno prefered it that way.

The last category was of course the teachers.

They were the best, even though Techno had still yet to meet one that really got him.

Some were awful, just as bad as staff, or worse, but others, others cared for Techno, wanted to do well. They may not have understood him, but they had done their best to be kind. Techno recognizes that, acknowledges that,.

It's not enough, it will never be enough. Techno deserves better than people trying. He deserves people succeeding.

But it was something. Is something.

But whatever, the current problem category with school was the students, and their current science class lesson.

A classmate raises her hand.

"Yes Monica," the teacher calls.

"So basically doing these tests can tell parents if their child has any deficiencies so they can abort the pregnancy?"

The teacher hesitates. At least there's that, at least she hesitates.

"Yes and no, it's not necessarily about whether to abort or not, but providing information and knowledge. It gives all sorts of information about a variety of disorders."

As if on cue, the entire class turns to look at Techno.

Monica speaks up again.

"Okay but, shouldn't those pregnancies be aborted? Y'know, if there's something wrong with the kid."

Techno leans into his seat. He really doesn't want to be discussing eugenics at 9am on a Monday. Especially when he knows he's going to be the only one who really understands what's happening.

And because he's the only one who knows what's going on, he gets ready to speak up.

"It's, I mean wouldn't it be best for the fetus?" she asks, "It's about the best for everyone."

Techno freezes, and his words die in his mouth.

Because fuck, if that doesn't ring a bell.

His mom, his mom and dad.

Techno had asked them once… had asked.

Techno didn't know exactly what they did. But he did know some people got hurt. And he had asked why, why some people had to be hurt, had to die.

"It's what's best for everyone, son," his dad had said.

"You'll understand when you're older," his mom promised.

And now. Well now…

Techno got it.

Techno understood.

His parents were wrong.

He gets up packing his bag, ignoring as the entire class looks at him, many whispering, and as his teacher calls his name.

He walks right out, goes to the nearest bathroom, and pukes in the toilet. When he's done and cleaned himself up, he goes to the nurses office, and refuses to leave until they call Phil to pick him up.

He tells the nurse hius stomach hurts. She shoots him a look, both knowing he's lying. But Techno knows just what to say, what buttons to press and soon enough Phil is on the line.

Techno waits in the front office, and he only has to wait thirteen minutes. Phil must have left work quickly. He appreciates the efficiency.

Techno shuffles into the car, Phil going back around to the driver's seat as they make their way home.

"Heard you weren't feeling well," Phil says.

That's true. Phil did hear that. Techno had been there when the nurse had told Phil. Techno knows that, Phil knows that, so why did Phil say that? It's not new information.

"Techno?"

"Hmm, what?"

"Sorry," Phil says, "I phrased that poorly. You're not feeling well. Can you tell me what's wrong? Is there anything i can do to help?"

"Phil," Techno says.

"Yeah mate?"

"I don't think my parents were good people."

Part of him wants Phil to tell him that's not true, that they are good people, there's just been a mix up. Techno wants to hear that all of this is wrong and that tomorrow his parents will be there and Techno will go home with them.

The other half of Techno wants Phil to tell the truth.

"Yeah," Phil says, "Yeah. Techno I'm sorry. They um- I don't know if 'bad people' is the right term, but they did some pretty bad things."

Techno nods. He stares at the houses on the side of the road, watching each of the cookie cutter designs pass him by. A piece of hair falls in his face, falling loose from the braid he had poorly done himself earlier. He's still nowhere near as good as his mom, and his hair is still fairly short, even if he can finally do a proper braid.

Half of him gets what he wants.

He other half… well…

He didn't really expect anything better.

Chapter End Notes

I'm back and boy am I excited for this one. Techno's story is one I've known for so long, and I feel like all of you are going to learn so much about him through this.

~Cool Community Things to Check Out!~

Encompass Sandbox Project: The official guide to the Encompass Sandbox Project- a project in which users are encouraged to take inspiration from the encompass series and create their own varying works of fiction from writing, to art, and so much more.

encompass: the sandbox: encompass: the sandbox is the official collection for the Encompass Sandbox Project.

encompass: behind the scenes: an insider look at everything that goes on in the encompass series. This series will feature Q&A, projects, plans, and other behind the scenes content.

stay with me

Chapter Summary

Techno's finally adjusted, finally settled in to living with Phil. And then that all gets turned on its head.

Chapter Notes

CW: general shittiness of the foster system, ableism, mentions of terrorism, bombs, and death

Techno asks for his first haircut when he's twelve years old.

It's a Big Deal. A Big Deal with capitals and everything. Phil and him haven't really had an entire conversation about his hair, but Techno knows that Phil knows that his hair's important to him. Phil's never pushed the issue of getting it cut, not since that very first meltdown two years ago.

But Phil- well Phil hasn't pressured him, no, not at all. But he tells him politely that getting hair cut semi-regularly is important to hair health and that Techno's tips are dying.

Techno knows this, knows it better than Phil does. To Techno's knowledge Phil's never had long hair, much less experience with caring for it all. Phil's hair is longer than most men's, sure, but it's still nowhere near the length Techno once had.

Techno knows his tips are damaged, can feel the split ends daily.

But he can't bear to cut something that had been taken from him and he had worked so hard to get back.

It's still nowhere near as long as it was. When it was down- fully- Techno used to be able to sit on it. Now it falls two or three inches past his shoulders.

He doesn't want to cut it.

But the split ends get to him, making it unbearable.

He stims with his hair, always has. It's a good texture, a safe texture. Techno can run his hands through it, petting it, brushing it, braiding it.

But now when he runs his hands through, they always snag at the ends, getting stuck on the damaged tips and twisting uncomfortably on split ends. What has always been a safe texture has become unpleasant.

He knows it's time.

And he knows, he knows Phil won't make it cut it short.

He approached Phil on an afternoon, shoulders tense, drawn. He needs to do this, but that doesn't mean he wants to.

"I need to get my hair cut," Techno announces to Phil's office from where he's doing… well whatever he's doing on the computer.

Phil turns to him, twists his head and pulls away from his desk.

"Okay," Phil says, "What do you want me to do?"

Techno walks into the room and flops onto the beanbag that Phil had added about a year ago, just for him. The thought still makes Techno feel all warm inside.

"I don't want to," Techno explains, "But I need to."

"Techno," Phil says, all gentle like, "Techno you don't have to cut your hair."

Techno breathes a sigh of relief. Good, Phil really does get it. It's nice for Techno to receive that confirmation, that affirmation. Especially when he's about to go through with something he really, really doesn't want to do.

"I know," Techno agrees. I don't have to. I don't want to. But I really, really need to."

Techno can feel Phil staring at him. He just hopes the elder doesn't challenge him.

"Okay," he agrees, "We can figure out somewhere you like. If you want, we can set up an appointment just to talk before they even cut your hair.

Techno considers the offer, headed tilted.

"Yes," he eventually decides, "That works. I want that."

He then gets off his bean bag and heads for the door. Before he disappears, he turns back to where Phil's already back to typing away on his computer.

"Hey Dad?"

"Hm?"

"Thanks."

Neither of them notice that it's the first time Techno's used those words for Phil.

The first hair salon, Techno refuses to go into. It smells too bad. The second's too loud. The third is perfect, but Techni doesn't like the people and can't stop staring at the clippers on the table.

The fourth, the fourth works out.

Coincidently, the guy who he talks to about his hair is also named Phil. Phil- his dad, not the hairdresser- rolls his eyes when Techno laughs at the realization.

Phil- the hairdresser- asks him about his hair, and they talk. Phil doesn't touch his hair until Techno says it's okay, and he even listens to Techno's requests to not use any oil or product. He combs through it gently, hums when Techno admits his tips really need care, and treats Techno like he knows what he's doing, what he wants.

Which is true! Techno knows his hair, knows himself, knows what he's looking for.

He just needs some help achieving that.

Phil's going to help with that. (Both of them this time, one for his hair and the other for everything else).

They take two inches off later that same week.

Techno cries when it happens, but he doesn't panic, and Phil- the hairdresser- let's him have a soda, pausing whenever Techno requests.

At the end, Phil the hairdresser- calls him brave as Techno sniffles into Phil's- his dad's- chest.

And then it's over, and his hair feels pleasant once more.

Techno's parents aren't going to be able to take care of him for eight years, minimum. Eight years if they're really really lucky. Most likely it'll be ten to twelve at best. And well, by then Techno doesn't need anyone to take care of him. In eight years, in the best case scenario, Techno will already be a legal adult.

Techno isn't getting his parents back. Not while he's still a kid. And really, that's just his mom. His dad- His dad… well Techno might see him in thirty.

So Techno has some choices to make.

At least this social worker is much better than his last. Alexander. Techno likes the name. It rolls of his tongue easily. Alexander also calls him Techno instead of Technoblade and in turn tells Techno he can call him Akex.

Alex is good.

The thing is- the thing is Techno has some choices to make.

"Your parents aren't going to be able to care for you for many years," Alexander says, "But they haven't- you haven't been completely separated from them, and they still have some legal standing as your parents. Which puts us in a very awkward grey area."

"Okay," Techno whispers, eyes on the table.

"Want me to explain that to you?"

Techno nods.

"Right. So it pretty much means that you'll have co-guardian ship. Your parents aren't in a position to care for you, so they have had to sign over some rights, but because they kept some, you can't be put under full guardianship of another person. This means you can't be adopted, and if you want to eventually emancipate yourself, you'd have to go to court if they refused to support that route."

Alex sighs.

Techno's never heard Alex sigh like that before.

"It also means you can't stay with Phil."

"What!" Techno shouts, "Wait, what, why?"

"It's been determined that it's best for you to be in a stable environment. The plan is to move you to a group home that has a few kids in a similar situation as you. You'll be able to grow up there, in a consistent and safe environment. Phil was only ever meant to be a temporary placement, and now that we know where your case legally stands, we can accordingly set you up in a family, in an environment that will suit you best. Your new foster parents, these other kids, they get it. They know what you've been through and they're here to support you."

Techno eyes widen.

"But I want to stay with Phil!"

Alex sighs. Alexander sighs. Fuck nicknames, Alex is taking him away from Phil!

"I know," Alex says, "I know, but Techno that's actually one of the concerns."

"What? What do you mean?"

"Techno… you and Phil have grown quite close in the past two years."

Techno nods. Yeah no duh, they've kind of been living together and Phil's pretty much the only decent adult he's met besides his parents. He would have included Alex onto that short list, but not anymore. Not after this.

"There's concerns," Alex considers, "Well there's concerns that you've gotten too close. Phil-Phil's supposed to take care of you, be a legal guardian, a placeholder until you can be reunited with your parents."

"But I won't even be a kid when-"

"Phil isn't your dad. He's not supposed to be your dad."

Techno's eyes spring full of tears. He's not sure why those words hurt so much. He's really not liking Alex at all anymore.

"I'm staying with Phil," Techno says. He's stubborn, and they can't convince him otherwise.

"You can't. You won't be."

Techno tries to think- he tries to think of any loophole, any way out of this. What could he do?

And then he has an idea.

"What if Phil adopts me?" Techno declares.

Alex stares, most likely baffled. He couldn't have prepared himself for Techno's genius.

"Techno- like I said your parents still-"

"But if he adopted me, could I stay?"

"I mean- yes I guess technically. But he can't adopt you, regardless of if he even wants to-"

"I'm leaving now," Techno announces, and he marches right out of the door. He has a plan to execute.

"Phil," he announces the minute he enters the door, "I want you to adopt me."

"Oh my god, Techno," Phil immediately frets. He races over, looking Techno up and down for any sign of harm, eyes wide.

"You're okay!"

"Yeah," Techno says, "'Course I am."

"Alex called me, he said you stormed out of your meeting and just left? And I called your phone but you didn't pick up."

"Oh."

Techno checks his phone.

It's dead.

Techno shows it to Phil.

"Never do that again," Phil says, "Jesus Christ you can't just- Techno you can't do that! God I thought you knew better than that and"

Oh. Phil's angry. Techno doesn't know if he's ever seen Phil genuinely angry before. Especially not at him. It's sort of scary.

"Fuck Techno," Phil says, "you can't do that! You're still a kid you can't do shit like that-"

Techno hangs his head, and grits his teeth.

He's never really been chewed out by Phil before. Already, he's not very fond of it.

But Phil pauses in his rant. His breath hitches, and out of nowhere tears pour out of his eyes.

"Sorry, sorry, " Phil says when he startles Techno with his sobs.

Phil crying is an entirely new type of scary. Techno kind of thinks he would have preferred the rant and scolding to this. Whatever this is. Whatever is happening right now.

Techno creeps closer and gives Phil an awkward pat on his shoulder in some sort of attempt at comfort. He doesn't knows if it works.

Seconds later and Phil is pulling him close. He shoves his face next to Techno, pulling him tight to his chest.

Techno can feel Phil's breath on his neck, his cheeks and lips on his hair.

It's not an unpleasant experience. In fact, Techno finds himself enjoying the heavy pressure of Phil's arms and soft fluttering of Phil's eyelashes brushing his hair.

"I'm sorry," Phil says, "it wasn't fair for me to get that angry at you. I was just really scared that you could have gotten hurt or lost. But that didn't make me getting mad okay."

Techno leans into Phil's chest

"I mean, some of it's probably warranted," Techno acknowledges, "I did kind of disappear and not tell you where I was going."

"Yes," Phil agrees, "and we will need to talk about that. But I'm an adult and I know how to communicate in a healthy manner and me getting mad and chewing you out as well as insulting you the minute you got home wasn't okay and it's important that I hold myself responsible for that. I'm sorry for my actions and I'm going to genuinely work on responding in a more appropriate manner in the future."

Techno nods, loving the sensation of his hair rubbing against Phil's face. It's the perfect tactile sensory experience.

Phil slowly starts to pull away, but Techno grips him harder. Phil doesn't protest, falling right back into the hug. Techno continues nodding, letting his hair and Phil's cheek rub at the right angle. He also lets out a low, listening to how the noise reverberates but also how he vibrates and passes that vibration through Phil.

They stay like that, Phil holding Techno close and letting him use his body as a tool for Techno to stim with.

"I want you to adopt me," Techno eventually says, ceasing the humming for now but continuing the nodding.

"I heard. Alex told me."

Techno frowns.

"What did he say?"

"That in the absence of your parents you've developed severe attachment issues and clung to the closest thing you could get, which was me, and therefore are refusing to leave me even though it isn't the ideal or best long term situation for you."

"I'm not clingy," Techno scoffs, still holding tight into Phil.

Phil laughs at the claim.

"I dunno mate, looking kind of clingy right now."

"Shut up," Techno protests, "this doesn't count."

Phil laughs again.

"And Alex is wrong anyways," Techno says, "I am attached to you- he was right about that- but not in a bad way. You're the first decent adult besides my parents. You've supported my needs and let me advocate for myself while also defending me and stepping in when needed. You value my independence and practice interdependence. You trust me and don't expect me to do the same. You respect my autism and my ADHD and correct your ableism. You're a good person, which is more than I can say about all of the other adults I've met in my life."

Phil closes his eyes.

Techno knows he does because he can no longer feel the gentle twitching if Phil's eyelashes against his hair.

"Techno-"

"I can't go back to my parents, obviously," Techno continues, "and even if my mom gets out earlier, I'd be 18, 19. Even if I did live with her, I wouldn't be a kid. I won't need a legal guardian."

"Techno-"

"So," Techno continues, "Alex wants to move me to a home with other kids in similar situations like mine ignoring the fact that I already have a safe and steady place to call home. In addition, he wants to speed this process up, ignoring my own needs as an autistic person

who struggles with change just because he perceives our relationship as irresponsible and intense because-"

"Techno," Phil urges.

Techno finally pauses, really only because he need to take a breath. Even he can only talk for so long.

"Okay," Phil says, "I- yes. I'll adopt you."

"Oh," Techno says, "that was pretty easy."

Phil laughs.

"You don't need to convince me to do something that was already a given."

Techno gives a small smile. Finally, things are working out.

Things are very much not working out

Because Techno and Phil have agreed to this, but no one else has and now it's an entire shit show. Because technically even though Phil has said yes to adopting Techno, he still legally can't, not with the conditional custody his parents have. And even if they did approve, with Alex working on his case there's a chance the system would block it.

Phil can't really talk to Techno's parents, but he can talk to the system.

The system wants to seperate them, says it's for the best.

Phil tells them to prove it.

So prove it they try to do. There's home checks and evals and Techno has to talk to more people than he ever wants to in his entire life.

It's a three month process.

It's a three month process for them to agree that Phil would be a good fit, that not only would it be acceptable for Phil to adopt Techno, but probably the best option for Techno.

And honestly, it does nothing.

Because Phil still can't adopt him without his parents releasing custody. Which they won't do.

Phil sent a form request and everything. They had been denied in a heartbeat

Technos been mad at his parents before. He doesn't think he's ever been more mad than in this moment.

Don't they get it? Techno doesn't have a choice.

They made their choices. And their choices landed them in prison with no viable way to care for Techno. It was their own fault for getting there. They made their beds, and now they had to lie in them.

Techno is in this situation because of them. They're the ones who made him even have to request someone who was a random stranger a few years ago to be his permanent caretaker.

It's then that Techno's resentment toward his parents starts.

"Fuck this," Techno hisses.

"Techno," Amelia says, "I'm sorry, my hands are tied."

At least Amelia's trying her best. She's better than stupid Alex who pretended to care.

"I don't want to go!" Techno protests.

"Phil can't adopt you. Your grades are slipping and you're getting into fights at school. Your mental health and wellness marks are down and you're refusing to go to therapy. I'm sorry. You leave in two weeks."

Techno wants to cry. He never cries.

They worked so hard. They worked so hard and his parents just said no.

And for some stupid reason they have the power to say no and that's what changes Techno's entire life.

He's moving fifty miles away. Fifty! Who the fuck thought that was a good idea? And he's going to be with a family he doesn't like, one he's never met and knows nothing about.

He has Phil. He doesn't want to leave that, and it's stupid that they're making him.

But Techno doesn't get a choice.

He tried. They tried.

And they failed.

Techno gets a week to get his things together.

Phil tries to downplay it, act like this isn't Techno going away for ever. Techno knows he's only trying to help. It doesn't help.

Techno doesn't want to leave, but he has to.

Mary and Jackson are fine foster parents. They let him hang onto the phone that Phil is still paying for and he only has to share his room with one other kid. There's five of them total, two younger then him, two older.

Techno shares a room with the one who's just a little older than him.

He's alright. He doesn't pick on Techno, and gives him his space. He's not too loud and keeps his area tidy.

Except Techno also heard his foster parents talk to him the other night reminding his foster brother that he was sensitive and had special needs so he had to be extra nice.

Techno doesn't want people to be extra nice to him, he just wants people to be people.

Decent people, but just… peole. He's not special. He's disabled. There's a difference.

His parents used to tell him he was special. And not because he was disabled. He was disabled, but he was also special. And it wasn't his disabilities that made him special, but his individual merit as a human being.

Techno wonders when that changed. He wonders when special became a bad word to him.

He lasts a month before running away.

He wants to go back to Phil, and if the system is hell-bent on separating them… well Techno will do it himself.

It takes him over four hours, but noon comes and goes and he's standing outside Phil's door. It's Sunday, so he should be home.

Techno doesn't even bother knocking, instead grabbing the spare key hidden by one of the planters. It's his own home anyways.

He creaks the door open, ducks inside, and is met with a loud "Jesus fuck" and the sound of someone falling onto the floor.

Techno observes Phil from where he lies on the ground, obviously having fallen off the couch.

"I'm home," he announces

"Techno?" Phil asks.

Techno smiles. It's the only bit of happiness he's going to get

Because Phil… Phil isn't happy to see him.

"What are you doing here?" He demands.

"I ran away," Techno says.

"You ran- do your foster parents know where you are?"

Techno shakes his head and moves to the couch. Looks like Phil was watching a nature documentary. That's cool. Techno likes animals.

"Techno," Phil stresses, "Techno you didn't- okay we have to call them."

"Do we have to?"

"Yes!" Phil stresses, "you can't just run away Techno!"

Techno sighs, and pulls his phone out of his pocket, handing it over to Phil.

"Last name is Taylors," he announces, turning back to the show. There's some sort of weird snake on screen that buries itself in sand.

It's pretty cool, quite cute as well.

Phil fumbles with his phone, scrolling through it. Soon enough he presses it against his ear, waiting.

"Hi, is this the Taylors?" he suddenly asks, standing up and walking away from the TV as he does so.

"Yes yes, he's fine. This is Phil, I-"

Techno zones out of the conversation, going back to watching the cool snake. Techno things he's going to call him Dust. It's because he's very dusty.

Eventually, Phil settles at his side again.

"Techno," Phil says. Technop stares resolutely at the screen. He doesn't want to have this conversation.

"Techno," Phil repeats.

Techno grunts.

"Your foster parents will be in here in about an hour," he says.

Techno frowns. He watches the snake rebury itself in the sand. He wishes he was where the snake was. He wishes he was the snake. Anything would be better than where he is right now.

"Techno," Phil says.

"Don't," Techno says, and his voice definetly doesn't wobble at all when he says that.

"Tech-"

And that- that's the last straw.

Techno screams, and leaps up from the couch, running to the bedroom he once called his own. He slams the door shut behind him and leaps onto the bed, climbing underneath the covers as quickly as he can.

He pulls them tight around him, curling up into a cocoon of blankets and tears. He screams into the pillow- what was once his pillow and hates everything about the entire situation.

First he was taken from his parents, and then Phil. How could things get any worse?

He's faintly aware of the creaking of the door, but elects to ignore it, instead doing his best to focus on breathing.

It's all too much. The covers are soft but they're still too rough and he's buried in the darkness but the light of the room still slips through in the corners and all the emotions Techno has inside of him build and build and build to make a mess of feelings.

He wants to scream again, but even the slightly shuffling sounds of moving on the bed are almost too much.

Then, as if Phil knew exactly what he was thinking, the lights turn off. The light fades and Techno doesn't have to work as hard to keep the light out.

The buzzing of the lights is also gone, something Techno honestly hadn't noticed had been bugging him. But now that it's gone, it seems so obvious.

All that's left is the covers really, but he can't bear to take those off yet.

"I'm going to sit right here by the bed," Phil announces, voice soft, quiet, and controlled. "When you're ready, I'll be here. Let me know if you need anything."

Techno doesn't respond, but he doesn't think Phil is really expecting a response anyways.

Slowly, his heavy breathing and crying slow, to where near silent tears only streak down his face. A few minutes later, and he carefully pokes his head out of his protective cocoon.

Phil smiles at him the instant he sees his face. Techno ca't muster the energy to return it, but he hopes Phil knows he would if he could.

"Hey," Phil says, "Metamorposis complete? Are you a butterfly now?"

Techno looks at him, blinks, and then looks down at his blanket. He giggles softly, not having the energy to do anything else. It's such a stupid comment for Phil to make, becoming a butterfly. But it makes him happy, so he laughs. That's about all he can do, he's most certainly nonverbal now.

Phil nods, as if Techno's giggles are answer enough.

"Glad to see your face," Phil says, "How you feeling?"

Techno shrugs. He doesnt even know if Phil can even tell from under the covers.

"Hmm," Phil observes, "Want some water?"

Techno nods.

"Okay, I'll be right back."

With that, Phil stands, his old man joints cracking as he does so. Techno watches him leave, exiting Techno's old room and heading towards the kitchen.

Techno really doesn't want to go back to his current foster home. He wants to stay here with Phil.

He stares at the far wall instead of thinking about the fact that he will eventually be forced back. It's not a pleasant thought.

The room is the same as when he left it- minus the things Techno took with him. It surprises him a bit, he thought Phil would have tidied when he left, but the same sheets are on the bed as the one Phil let Techno pick out. When he first got here, the room had been a guest room, and the sheets a simple blue. Techno had chosen cream sheets. He found the color soft, soothing.

The were nice quality, incredibly soft. They din't scratch against his skin like most sheets.

He had wanted to take them with him, but his new foster family had explained that the room he'd be moving into already had a theme, and his sheets wouldn't fit it.

So he had been forced to leave them. And Phil had kept them, even after he was gone.

Suddenly, there's an odd lump in Techno's throat. He doesn't like how it feels. He doesn't like how any of this feels.

Seconds later, Phil returns. He hands over the glass of water, and Techno takes it with shaky hands. He sits up, swinging his legs over the side of the bed but pulling the covers with him. He begins to sip the water slowly.

He's probably pretty dehydrated with all of the crying he did.

"Hey mate," Phil says, "We have maybe fifteen minutes until your foster parents get here."

Techno's shoulders hunch together.

"I know, I know," Phil soothes, "We don't have to talk about it if you're not up to it. But we also don't have a lot of time to talk about it if you want to. And I think it would be good to."

Phil has a point. Stupid Phil.

Techno sighs.

He still can't talk. Instead, he points over to his desk.

Hil seems to understand.

"You're nonverbal?" he guesses. Techno nods. "Paper and pen?" Phil guesses again. Another nod.

Phil stands once more, making his way over to what was Techno's desk and going through the drawers to get a piece of lined paper, a clipboard to write on, and a pen. Techno appreciates the addition of the clipboard. It's just like Phil to think about things like that.

"Did you have something you wanted to say first?" Phil asks, "or should I go ahead."

Techno gives a nod at Phil.

"Okay," he says, "Okay- well, you ran away for one. That has me pretty worried. Is something wrong at the new place?"

Techno frowns. That's much too simple, and much too complex at the same time.

'Yes and no,' Techno writes, 'they're ableist, but not cruel, or abusive. And they're not you.'

Phil frowns at the words.

"Have you tried talking to them about the ableism?' he asks, "I've definitely done and said things by accident because I didn't know. Have you given them a chance to try and learn?"

'Yes,' Techno writes.

"Can you expand on that?" Phil asks.

Techno shakes his head.

"Techno," Phil presses, "I can't help if you're not going to try with them. I know it can be hard, but.."

Techno cuts him off with a growl and angrily bangs his hands down on the bed before roughly knocking them together and rocking.

"Woah," Phil says, not unkindly, as he adjusts to the sudden intense stimming, "What's going on mate?"

Techno doesn't know what to say, how to tell him. He can't write because he needs his hands to stim but he also can't speak. He tries his best to do the latter.

He knows Phil won't force him to communicate, or to talk, but Techno wants to. He wants to explain.

He wants to explain that Phil himself is being ableist right now by not listening to Techno when he says his foster family is ableist and then expecting Techno to try instead of expecting them to change.

But he doesn't know how to explain all of that, especially when he can't talk and is still coming off a meltdown and overstimulated as fuck.

"When you can, let me know how I can help you, and I'll do my best," Phil promises.

And Techno- Techno wants to cry.

"You!" Techno shouts, because he doesn't know how to explain it any other way.

Because- Because it's Phil. All of it is Phil.

"Okay," Phil says, "okay. Hey let's take a few more deep breaths."

Techno follows Phil's lead, doing his best to deepen his short gasping breaths. It takes longer than he expects.

In fact, it takes so long that eventually Techno can hear a faint knock from all the way down the hall.

Phil sighs.

"I think that's the Taylors, Tech."

Techno doesn't want to go back. He doesn't get a choice.

So he's forced back to the Taylors.

He's scolded of course, told not to run off again. But he's also coddled, checked on, looked over.

Techno really doesn't know which one's worse.

He has to find another way out.

It still seems like his only option is adoption. But his parents won't sign off.

So he sets up a meeting.

His mom's had good behavior, so she's allowed visitors. His team of social workers and case managers and whoever else don't want him going, but he somehow convinces them.

It takes a month before the only thing separating the two of them is a glass wall. It's not like it is in movies, they have a separate room and there's no phones, but they are seperated, kept apart.

Technos hands shake as he looks at his mother.

God he misses her.

It hasn't been that long, but it's been more than long enough. A child shouldn't be away from his parents that long.

He loves her and he's her baby boy and all he wants is to go home with her and have things go back to the way they were.

But that can't happen because she's in jail for the bombs and he's not able to live with her anymore.

"Hi Mom," he chokes out, and then chooses to stim by shaking his head, attempting to settle some of his unknown emotions.

"Technoblade, honey," she says, "I missed you."

"I missed you to," he says, voice cracking. And why did she have to say that? It makes all of this so much harder.

"I'm so sorry sweetheart," she says, and it's so sincere, "We did this all for you. If I had known it would have ended with us seperated from you…" she trails off.

Techno chokes past the lump in his throat.

He has to ask his question before he loses his courage.

"I want you to sign away all legal rights to me," he says, "so that Phil can adopt me."

His mom stares at him.

Her face drops and Techno isn't good at emotions but he knows what his mom's hurt looks like and it's so plain to see on her face. He wants to cry.

He can't cry. If he cries he will never get through this.

"T," she says. And god- now she's using the nickname only her and his dad ever used, "T, what do you mean?"

"You're not getting out of here anytime soon," Techno says, "not before I'm eighteen. I'm not old enough to live by myself and I don't have the means to emancipate myself. So I have to live with a guardian.

"You and dad don't have relatives. You have no friends I can live with. Most of the group homes are ableist. And…" Techno hesitates, because his next words almost feel like a betrayal, "and- and I like living with Phil. Phil is my best option. Phil is my only option. But he can't take me unless you let him adopt me."

His mom stares at him, looks him in the eyes. Her face hardens and she turns away for a moment.

Techno gulps.

After a few long seconds, she turns back to face him fully.

"Okay," she says, and brushes away the tears from her eyes, "okay. We'll do that."

"Yeah?" Techno chokes out around his own tears.

After all, he knows what he's asking. It's a big request.

"Yeah," she says, "Anything for you honey. Everything for you."

Techno closes his eyes and takes a deep breath.

"Okay," he says, "Thank you."

He stands and gets ready to leave.

"You aren't going to stay longer?" His mother asks.

Techno shakes his head.

"T, I haven't seen you in ages," she pleads.

Yeah she hasn't. Neither of his parents have seen him in a while, and before that they only saw him in court. And that's their own fault. Because they're terrorist and they did bad things and they killed people and set all those bombs off and-

Techno swallows. He doesn't know quite what to think about it all.

"I need to think," he says, "all of this has been… a lot."

His mother's face softens.

"Of course," she says, "Take all the time you need. Your father and I love you."

And god- that just makes it so much harder, doesn't it?

Chapter End Notes

Everyone's adoption story is different. In technos case, he just straight up asks Phil and I love that for him.

Hope y'all enjoyed. I'm behind on comments but hopefully will catch up soon! I reply to every one :)

~Cool Community Things to Check Out!~

Encompass Sandbox Project: The official guide to the Encompass Sandbox Project- a project in which users are encouraged to take inspiration from the encompass series and create their own varying works of fiction from writing, to art, and so much more.

encompass: the sandbox: encompass: the sandbox is the official collection for the Encompass Sandbox Project.

[encompass: behind the scenes](#): an insider look at everything that goes on in the encompass series. This series will feature Q&A, projects, plans, and other behind the scenes content.

away, a will

Chapter Summary

Techno goes home to Phil. From there, his family only expands.

Chapter Notes

This chapter deals with some incredibly rough topics so please pay attention to content warnings and feel free to ask me to clarify or expand on any of them

CW: ableism, general shittiness of the foster system, auditory hallucinations, gender stereotypes, forced sex labelling, unsafe situations, thoughts of physical harm towards others and self, mentions of terrorism and terrorist attacks, mention of murder and explosions, asshole teachers, bullying, mentions of a suicidal character, hallucination of the ghost of a character who in the hallucination committed suicide, severe mental health issues, mentions of running away

It takes two months to process. Two long months, but finally, finally Techno can go home to Phil.

The adoption hasn't been finalized, not yet, not completely, but it's close enough where the system doesn't see any point in waiting to reunite Phil and him.

It's a compromise that gets him home. He gets to go back to Phil's if he promises to give therapy another shot.

Anything for Phil. Everything for Phil.

So Technoblade gets to go home. Or what will be his home.

It's a bittersweet feeling. Most of his life is these days.

The day the adoption finally fully goes through, Phil takes him to a plant nursery. They walk around a lot, Techno wandering and looking up every plant he sees to find as much as he can about it.

At one point, Techno notices a worker speaking to Phil.

"My son's autistic too," he says, "if you need anything, let me know. And have fun."

Phil gives him a smile, and a nod ,and let's him pass by.

Techno flaps his hands, only half hearing the conversation.

"Phil," he says, "Phil look at this ivy! This type here split off from this one to grow better in cooler environments! Isn't that so neat?"

"Yeah," Phil says, "yeah it is. Tell me more."

Techno nods furiously and hops over to the next batch of ivy next to it, infodumping all the while.

The nursery is decent sized but it isn't humongous. Either way it still takes them close to three hours to make the entire way through it. Techno stops then every few seconds googling and rambling and having the best time ever.

He didn't know it at the time, but this trip would spark his special interest in plants and gardening.

When they finally make it all the way through, Techno turns to Phil.

"Why'd we come here?" he asks.

Phil looks at him.

"I thought you had a good time?"

"I did," Techno confirms, "but that doesnt answer my question."

Technoblade is not offended when Phil gets confused. Neurotypicals are odd that way sometimes, linking unrelated things together.

Techno asking why they came doesn't mean he didn't enjoy it, just that he wants to know why they came. There's no deeper meaning. Neurotyoicals always think there is.

Technoblade didn't mean he didn't have fun when he asked about why they came, it was just a question. A very genuine question.

Why did they come?

"Oh," Phil says, "well, I need to buy a plant."

"Okay," Techno says, "but why?"

Phil gives him a small smile.

"To plant it."

"Where?"

"At home."

Great. Now Phil's being obtuse on purpose. Even so, Techno doesn't really mind.

"Why now?"

"Because."

"Phil," Techno whines when he doesn't get a real answer.

"Techno," Phil mimics.

Techno huffs at the mocking, but he can't help but smile at it as well. He rolls his eyes.

"You're weird," he announces.

The statement causes Phil to really, fully laugh.

"Thanks kiddo," he says, and then drags him to the other side of the nursery.

Phil selects a single rose bush, one with pale pink roses that are just starting to bloom.

It's small, not even a foot in height.

And that's all Phil grabs. They buy the one bush and then go home.

Phil let's Techno decompress, gain his energy back after being outside and in a public place with people for so long, but requests that if he's up for it, he join him in the living room in an hour.

Techno nods, and so that's what they do.

An hour later, the two of them, plus the rose bush are in the living room.

"Will you plant this with me?" Phil asks, "out front."

Technos never planted anything before. But it seems fun. He does like plants.

"The soil might be a bad texture," he warns.

"That's okay," Phil promises, "if it is, you don't have to touch it."

That sounds fair enough, so Techno nods and leaps up to follow him outside.

Together they dig out a spot right in front of the house. The soil is soft and surprisingly moist. Techno finds himself loving the texture. It's surprising, considering he doesn't usually like things that cling to his skin, but something about the soil feels right.

And the smell- it smells like the earth.

Which okay that makes sense, but it's a good, cleansing smell.

It also smells a bit like manure, mostly from the new plant, but Techno tries to ignore that bit.

Together, Phil and him place the plant in the hole and cover it with dirt, packing it in and then watering it.

They sit back, admiring their work.

It's a small bush, measly in the front yard. From a bit away you won't even be able to see it.

Technoblade doesn't understand why they'd plant something you can't even notice. You won't be able to see it until it grows bigger. And that would take a long-

Oh.

Oh so that's what this about.

"Techno," Phil says after a moment of silence, he looks down and then frowns, thinking.

"My papers went through," Techno says, "you- I'm adopted. You adopted me."

Phil whips his head up.

"How did you-"

A moment later Phil's confused frown morphs to a smile. He laughs, tipping his head back.

"Of course you knew," he corrects himself, "the bush, huh?"

"Mhmm."

"Okay, still want me to give my sappy speech?"

Yes he does want that. He wants the recognition, the validation that he's Phil's, and Phil is his.

"Yes please," Techno says.

"Right, well, Tech- Techno," Phil corrects, "you are- you are a phenomenal, strange child. You are so so special and I am so proud to be able to adopt you and watch you grow up here. And as you grow, as you come into adulthood, well that's why we have the rose bush. You can grow alongside it. And- and you know it doesn't just flower, right? It grows roots and you want- I want this home to be yours too.

"I know you still love your parents. And I won't- I don't want to take that away from you. Maybe- maybe those can coexist together. Maybe I can be yours, just like they are. If that's what you want."

Techno hates emotions.

He knows his face is blank, and sure his hands are flapping like crazy, but that's not how Phil sees love is it? Phil sees love by hugs and smiles- but, but that isn't Techno's language.

All he can do is flap his hands and hope Phil understands.

And Phil does.

Because when he starts to see Techno doing this stimmy hand flaps and light jumps, Phil breaks into tears.

Techno knows he's found the right person, someone who truly understands him.

And Techno is Phil's.

And Phil is Techno's.

And then suddenly, where there's a way, there's a Wil.

Literally.

It's Techno's idea, actually. Or not idea, but Techno's the one that brings it up- asks if Phil's still interested in fostering.

"I don't think I can foster," Phil says, "not after you. Not without the intent to adopt. You being- losing you for that short bit was too much. I can't do it again."

"Okay," Techno says, "so why don't you just adopt?"

And where there's a way, comes a Wil.

Wilbur is an… interesting addition to the household.

He keeps running away which is a bit annoying, because then Phil has to go looking for him and Techno has to think about the last place he saw him and what could have set him off this time.

But Wilbur is also kind, listens and respects him, and loves geography.

Techno couldn't care less if he was kind. It's a nice addition, he guesses, but he prefers being respected and the interest in geography.

Wil really loves geography which means that Techno has a whole new thing to learn a ton about.

Techno's not always the best at showing that he cares about someone, but the one thing he can do is learn all about their interests to show he cares.

So he does that.

He thinks Wil likes having a friend to talk about geography with.

He thinks.

He hopes.

Wilbur also likes this hair, which is cool.

"I haven't seen many boys with long hair," Wilbur notes one day.

Techno knows it's not a question.

"Yeah," he agrees, "dunno. Like it better this way. It's soft."

It's finally long again too, actually long. He still can't sit on it like he used to be able to, but he is more than able to pull it back and braid it with ease. It falls a good fair inches past his shoulders now.

Wilbur nods.

"I used to have long hair," Wilbur shares.

"Cool," Techno says.

"I'm- I'm intersex. The doctor's declared that I was a girl when I was born. They kind of fucked up though."

"Is that why you had long hair?"

"Yeah. My parents would have let me cut it if I asked," Wilbur explains, "but I never did. I didn't know. I didn't get it cut until a few years ago with my aunt and uncle."

"Didn't know what? That you were intersex? Or that they would have let you cut it?"

"That I was intersex."

"Oh. Well I mean- hair is just gender expression. Not identity or sex."

"I know."

"Okay. Are your pronouns still he/him?"

"Yeah," Wilbur says, "I'm trans masc. Not a guy but, like a guy I guess."

"Cool. You know I've been reading some trans theory and-"

And that's how Wilbur and Techno really begin to bond, over hair and trans theory.

Techno's never been good at making friends, but he's surprisingly good at making brothers.

And it's Wilbur that storms home in his defense.

"Phil!" Wilbur shouts, "Phil, Techno's teacher didn't let him participate in science lab!"

"Wilbur," Techno hisses, head down and shoulders drawn. He doesn't want confrontation, but he's prepared for it anyway, "you don't need to tell him."

"Too bad, he should know. Phil!"

"Yes Wilbur?" Phil asks as he enters the room. Wilbur repeats all that he's just said.

"Is that true Techno?" Phil asks.

Techno shuffles on his feet, stares at the ground, and nods.

"How come?" Phil asks, "Did he say why?"

He did say why. Techno knows why. But he doesn't want to tell Phil.

He mutters his answer under his breath.

"What?" Phil asks.

Techno sighs, squares his shoulders, and gets angry.

"Cause we were doing stuff with chemical reactions."

"Okay?" Phil says, and it's so obviously a question. Even for how fucking dumb Techno can be with this shit sometimes.

"Visible chemical reactions," Techno says, "basically little miniature explosions."

"Right?" Phil says, still not understanding.

"He didn't think it'd be smart for me to be involved."

God can't Phil catch a hint? Techno doesn't want to talk about this.

"Why not?" Phil asks, "you're a good student, and well behaved."

"He didn't think the kid with the parents who are convicted terrorists who bombed a building should be playing with explosive chemicals," Techno says in no uncertain terms.

"Techno-"

"Oh yeah," Techno says, "and he told the entire class. So that was great."

And with that, he storms off.

He just wants to be left alone.

He knows what his parents did, vaguely. He was there for the court case. But they kept him away from a lot of things, both his parents and the court.

But then his teacher- his teacher brought it up and Techno had felt so humiliated, so alienated.

Well he had looked it up.

He knew his parents killed people, but it was different seeing the bodies. It was different watching the videos, hearing the scream.

'Minor Terrorism.'

It didn't seem so minor to him.

Could his parents really do that?

Did they really do that?

They really did that.

He just wants to be left alone.

It gets so bad, he has to switch schools.

He doesn't like his new school, but it sort of works out because Phil has been wanting to move to a bigger house and Wil and Tech are all for it. It's going to have an upstairs!

Techno is even going to have one of the rooms downstairs. That'll be so cool. He can have his own personal space.

So he suffers through a few months at an awful school because the one he'll be moving to is so much better anyways.

Phil looked a lot at schools when thinking about moving, asking about support services. They have a good Special Ed program. An actual good one, which is hard to find. One of the teachers is actually autistic himself.

It won't be perfect, special education is a broken system so it can only be so good. Plus, Techno isn't in many of the segregated classes anyways, but for the ones he is, well they should be better than the joke that was his old school.

So they move.

Phil and Wilbur both offer to help him move the rose bush, but Techno decides to do it all by himself

Phil made it clear when he sold the house to the owners that the rose bush would be coming with them.

Technos surprised how much it's grown. It's a full on bush now, spikes and all.

But really, the impressive parts are its roots. Would it be stupid to say he gets misty eyes just looking at the dangling fibers of the plant?

They move.

And it's great.

And Techno loves the new house.

But it's not long after that things begin to go wrong.

It's Wilbur who catches him. Hands clutched on scissors, quivering and shaking as he slowly holds them up to his hair.

He doesn't want to do this.

Hair. Cut the hair. Cut the hair cut the hair cut the hair cUT THE HAIR CUT THE HAIR.

he doesn't want to do this but the voices in his head won't shut up and he doesn't know what else to do and he's so tired and he can't think any more and-

CUT CUT CUT

Techno screams and clutches the two sides of the scissors together. With a smooth snip, a solid five inch lock falls from the back of his hair. Techno watches the link hair tumble down onto the ground, breathing heavily.

He hoped this would help, but the voices only frown louder.

CUT MORE BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD SO GOOD CUT AGAIN MORE MORE MORE.

"Techno," Wil says. Techno whips his head over to look at him, barely avoiding stabbing himself in the skull with the scissors. "What are you doing?"

Techno stares at him with wide eyes, scissors still clutched firmly on the single thick lock of hair on the ground.

"I have to!" he cries.

IGNORE HIM AGAIN AGAIN AGAIN CUT THE HAIR MORE CUT IT CUT MORE MORE MORE.

But Techno doesn't want to! All he wants is for it to stop. He wants the voices to stop the mutterings, the talking, the insistent screaming.

All of it.

He wants it to stop

The voices keep telling him to cut his hair.

With a scream he falls to his knees, clutching his head in his hands and letting out a large screech.

He presses his palms firmly against his temples as if that would do any good.

Techno's vaguely aware of Wilbur leaving him.

Of course he left. Techno's screaming with a pair of scissors as he chops off his head because the voices in his head told him to.

He's crazy, a wacko, so fucked up.

He hates this. He just wants it to stop.

"Techno," Phil says, creeping into the room, "Hey bud. Can we put down the scissors."

Techno sobs, but does so, dropping the pair so they clatter to the floor. It's definitely not the safest way to put down a pair of scissors, but honestly it's probably better than Techno holding them, especially so close to his head.

"Thank you," Phil says, "it seems like all of this is really hard right now. Thank you for giving me the scissors."

It is hard! It sucks! Techno just wants it to stop.

"What do you need from me?" Phil asks.

SCISSORS, scream the voices. *NO get them back so close cut the hair cut cut more get the scissors. Blood. Stab. Get the scissors and stab Phil. No hair! No stab. Phil stopped cutting stab him instead. Stab then hair. Yes. Stab Phil and then cut hair. Get the scissors.*

"I don't want to hurt you," Techno sobs.

"Techno, you could never hurt me," Phil says, "I love you."

Phil's so kind, so good. He doesn't get it.

He doesn't get that Techno really could hurt him. Could physically hurt him.

Stab him, the voices chime in, stab him, the scissors are right there. Stab him.

"No," he cries, "no. No, I could hurt you. I can. I want to. The voices told me too."

"...the voices?"

If you're not going to stab him, stab yourself, one of the voices chime in. *Instantly, the rest start to pitch in agreement.*

Stab yourself, they insist, *the leg, the leg. Stab your leg, your foot, hour arteries. Kill yourself. Let Phil watch you bleed out and die right here on the floor STAB YOURSELF DO IT DO IT*

Techno can't take this anymore. He reaches for the scissors.

But Phil beats him to it, taking the pair of scissors firmly in his hands.

"Techno," he pleads. And god, he sounds so scared. Techno did that to him.

Techno sobs and tells him everything. And what a long everything that is.

The voices- auditory hallucinations- are a lot to deal with. But eventually on the right meds and through a fuck ton of therapy, they get easier to manage.

He doesn't like to think about those few months, the in-between period, where they weren't easy to deal with.

We're he felt like he was crazy and he was so scared.

And Phil- God perfect fucking Phil was understanding and supportive but Techno could tell that he was scared too, terrified in fact.

Not of Techno, but for Techno, of what this meant.

And Techno thinks- well Techno thinks Wil was scared of him for a little bit too.

But Techno gets on meds, he gets therapy, and they do some family therapy as well.

Phil shares how worried he is for Techno. Wilbur shares how scary it was finding Techno.

Techno, well Techno mostly shares about how this experience is foreign and new and terrifying in the worst ways possible but he feels like he can't even show that because he has to make sure Phil and Wilbur aren't scared which means Techno doesn't have any time to deal with it himself which means be stressed twenty four seven and…

And turns out stress causes him to hallucinate more.

Techno wants to cry.

But, but things get better. A lot better. They figure out their new normal together as a family. They adjust, and learn, and eventually it's not quite as scary.

Techno doesn't think he can joke about it, not yet, but we'll… It's better than before.

No more fear, no more tip toeing. He's managing.

Techno doesn't like to remember when he wasn't.

But the clear voices aren't the tricky part, not for long. He learns how to cope with those, recognize them for what they are, and let them pass him by.

Once he gets used to them, they're so obviously hallucinations.

Plus, the meds help reduce the physical voices a lot. He doesn't deal with them nearly as often.

The ones that sucks are the ones that sound real.

A freaking door, footsteps, laughter down the hall, Wilbur's voice, Phil's voice, a knock on the door.

Small, mundane things.

It's like living in a haunted house, except it's his mind that's haunted, not the house.

He's called 'come in' to his door so many times only for no one to be there.

Those are the hard ones.

And then he'll make mistakes.

He hears a knock on the door, and ignores it. He hears a knock again, and ignores it once more.

It's at the third knock he calls out a hesitant, "come in."

His door opens and Techno scrambles back in surprise, almost falling off his bed. He hadn't been expecting someone to actually be there!

"Uh, you good," Wilbur half laughs.

Techno nods, and scrambles to compose himself.

"What's up," he asks, going for nonchalant.

Wilbur shrugged.

"Dunno. Wanted to do something. Want to join me?"

Techno blinks, then shrugs.

"Sure, I've got nothing better to do," he agrees, slamming his computer shut. He had been bored anyway. He had finished the three most recent books he had gotten and was once again out of reading material.

He needed to go back to the library, and the book store.

There's a lot of crunching noise behind him, the sound of someone stepping on glass.

Except, there's a wall behind him. So it's impossible for the crunching of glass to be happening. He doesn't look.

"Well come on then," Wilbur encourages.

Techno snorts and gets to his feet. He packs a bag quickly, headphones, stim shit, and sunglasses going in it along with his wallet. Phone in his pocket, keys in his bag.

Grab his shoes and he's good.

"Okay," Techno says. He hears his voice echoed back at him from all sides.

"Let's go," Wilbur encourages, and off they are.

They head toward town because that's the only direction anything really is.

They walk around a bit, walking into town and travelling street to street. Wilbur- who's usually quite loud and expressive has fallen silent.

He only really does that when he's thinking hard about something.

"What are you thinking about?" Techno says.

Wilbur looks up at him.

"How do you always know when I'm thinking about something?"

Technoblade shrugs.

"You go quiet," he says, "it's kind of obvious."

"Hmm," Wilbur says, but doesn't take the conversation any further.

"Well if you're not going to tell me, can I tell you about the latest book I read?"

"Sure," Wilbur says.

"Okay well actually it was three books, see, because it was a series. It's called His Dark Materials and the first book is the golden compass. It's by Philip Pullman. It has been on my list forever but I've never gotten around to it because there's been so many other things to read and while it sounded interesting it didn't sound that interesting so I held off.

"But I finally got to it and okay I don't want to spoil because you might read it-"

Wilbur would definitely not read. He didn't read a lot of the same fiction as techno. Especially not fantasy. But still! There was a chance he could!

"But I thought it was… well amazing. I really really like how Pullman wrote the main character. She's a kid and quite young and you can really tell? I don't know. I feel like when adults write kids in books a lot they feel very fake. They feel too young or too old and not really right? But she was written so, so well," Techno infodumps.

"Both her impressive maturity contrasted with her childish nature and it was just… wow. Such a good character. And she's definitely ADHD by the way," Techno adds on, "no doubt about it."

He passes there, to take a breath.

Wilbur smiles at him.

"It sounds really cool," he says, "she seems like a fun character."

Techno nods and taps a fist against his chest in a steady rhythm. He feels his entire body vibrate slightly at the pressure.

"Careful, Tech," Wil suggests, "you're hitting kinda hard."

Oh. Be hadn't noticed that. He pulls his band away from his chest and shakes them out a few times before taking his chest again, this time lighter.

He shakes his head, sending long hair flying because he's still so full of emotions from the book.

"What's it about?" Wilbur asks.

Techno bounces more and shakes out his hands.

It's a fantasy book and it has all of its own world and rules and he wants to tell Wilbur all about it because it's all so much and so incredible but.

But he can't talk.

Guess he's so overwhelmed with emotion and feelings he's gone nonverbal. Of course he has.

"Tech?" Wilbur asks, and looks his way.

Techno gestures to his throat and then back to flapping his hands.

"Ah," Wilbur says, and they walk in comfortable silence for a bit longer.

Not long after, Wilbur begins talking quietly about nothing. Techno enjoys listening to him ramble.

Eventually they pass by their old elementary school. God is Techno glad to not be there. Those were awful times.

"You should be nicer to us," a voice says, and it sounds so close, like it's leaning in and towards Techno to whisper in his ear, *"Things were rough back then."*

Techno ignores it.

Most of the voices are just that- voices. Random, a chorus chattering behind him. Even if they are distinct, Techno doesn't recognize them.

The exception is the one voice that seems to stick around the most.

"It was tough back then," the voice continued. It's still so weird to hear, because it's his own voice reflected back at him.

But it's not just his voice, it's his voice but younger.

"You're always too hard on us," young him continues, *"We've been through enough, you don't need to add to it."*

Techno clenches his hands and bites his tongue.

He'd like to give young him a few choice words, but Wilbur is right there.

"I swear half the therapy we need is from what you do to yourself," the young version of his voice continues, *"That and our parents. I mean they did do some pretty fucked up-"*

"Shut up!" Techno snaps. "Shut up, just be quiet! Fucking- stop!"

The voice falls silent.

So does Wilbur.

And just as the anger fills Techno, it fades, leaving a burning shame.

"I uh," he stumbles.

"It's okay," Wilbur says, and it's stiff, forced, "The uh- voices?"

"Mm," Tehno agrees and fuck he hates this. He must look like a fucking- fucking psycho.

"I uh- I wanted- is it okay- I-"

If Techno had the energy he'd tell Wilbur to just spit out the question. But he doesn't have the energy to request that. Instead, he watches and listens as his brother stumbles over his words.

"The voices," WIlbur finally manages, "I- well I wanted to say sorry."

Techno bristles. Great. Wilbur's a great guy, really. Techno's happy he's joined their family. But if he's about to be patronizing, apologize to him for having to deal with this bullshit. Techno thinks he might actually punch him.

But that's not what WIlbur apologizes for.

"I've been weird about it," he continues, "And I know it's probably a big enough adjustment for you and then to have the rest of us treating you weird about it. I just- I dunno. So I'm sorry for it taking me time. I want to get better at it. Understanding it, and just like, being there for you however you want me there."

Techno considers.

And fuck, Wilbur's dipped his toes in, why not take the plunge.

"I was yelling at myself," Techno says, "The meds help, they decrease the general voices, and the other auditory hallucinations are a bit better too. But, but well this one voice has gotten louder and it's just gonna stick around I think. And that voice is me, but younger."

"Oh."

"Yeah, and he likes to be a complete fucking asshole and tell me to be kinder to myself but in the way that it makes everything seem like my fault and that I'm a jerk."

"Ah."

"Yeah, I know," Techno grumbles, "I'm a fuckin' psycho."

"That's kinda ableist y'know."

Techno whips to face him, raising an eyebrow.

"Well," Wilbur says, "I mean it kinda is. Because psycho comes from psychosis. Which is a legit medical condition, right? And it's not one you have, right? So y'know, it's kinda a dick move to use the word 'psycho' like that. It demonizes people that actually deal with psychosis.

"Your struggles, anger, frustration- valid as fuck. But don't demonize some other condition when you're struggling with your own."

Techno considers the thought.

"You know you're the only one who would actually do that, right?"

"Do what?"

"Call me out for being ableist."

Wilbur shrugs.

"Someone has to."

Techno likes WIlbur, he doesn't put up with his bullshit.

"And really, seems like young you should fuck off."

Wilbur doesn't put up with any of his bullshit, even the weird voice of a younger him that follows around.

They continue into town.

As they walk, nothing really catches Wilbur's eye. Or Techno's eye for that matter. They go to the library and the bookstore as always, but other than that they don't have much to do.

But when they're about to head back, Wilbur spots it.

It's a hair store, nice, simple, Techno's actually been in and gotten products. Long hair like his takes care to maintain.

"That's the hair store you like, right?" Wilbur asks.

Techno nods.

"Ever think about dyeing your hair?"

No. Techno never has. He- hair is his thing and messing with it in any way is almost taboo.

But he thinks about how much he's changed recently and about the stupid young him that follows him around telling him how he's fucked up his life.

What's one more fuck up?

"Brightest color we can find," Techno decides.

Wilbur turns to him, eyes wide. Techno's thing about his hair isn't exactly a secret.

"Really?" he asks.

Techno nods.

They end up with bright bubble gum pink with the bleach to go along with it.

Wilbur wants to be the one who does it, and it only seems right. But he has Phil supervise. He's not sure he trusts WIl enough to not get bleach in his eyes.

They do two rounds of bleach to get it as light as possible. The scent is horrible and they open as many windows as they can.

Even so, it's still awful and Techno spends half the time stimming away his distress. He's asked if he wants to stop, but he refuses. He has to do this. He wants to do this.

He ends up going nonverbal, but it's worth it.

Because when it's done he has over a foot and a half of bright pink hair.

"Good?" Wilbur asks.

Techno whines and lets out an excited huff as he flaps his hands and bounces on his toes. Very good indeed.

The hair dye becomes their own little habit, him and Wilbur. It's a nice routine they have, rebleaching and dyeing as needed, always the same bubblegum pink.

And, well, that becomes Techno's new normal. Living with Phil and Wilbur, growing his hair out and dyeing it pink. Going to school that's not terrible and thriving and loving his English class and…

And it's starting to feel like home.

It's felt like home for a while now but…

But Techno still has had these walls up.

It's something he talks about with his therapist, about how even after feeling safe with Phil he's had these walls up, scared that he could get taken away again. It happened with his parents. It happened with Phil.

Who says it couldn't happen again?

But that fear has finally left, faded to a whisper.

A literal whisper, one that the voices taunt him with but can't reach him because…

Because he's safe. He's safe and he'll be okay.

His therapist and him have a long talk. He sets boundaries around his parents, finally addressing how he feels about them. He tells Phil, and trusts him to hold him accountable to them.

His therapist is proud of him. He's proud of himself. A month later and they end their sessions.

If Techno needs the support again in the future he can go back. But for now- for now he's doing well. He doesn't need that support.

He's okay.

He's okay and he's safe and he's doing well.

So is the rest of the family so they sit down and talk and decide it's time to shake things up again.

And therein arrives Tommy.

A month after Tommy arrives, a letter also turns up, addressed to Techno.

He doesn't usually grab the mail, but saw the mailman putting it in as he got back from school and decided to grab it and bring it. Do a small thing to help out.

The top letter has his name on it.

Technoblade.

And the last name- the last name isn't Watson.

Which…

Techno, Techno didn't legally change his name. But no one, no one actually uses that last name for him anymore.

Even in school, on file, his name is down as Techno Watson. The only things that say his legal name are his birth certificate, adoption certificate, license and ID, and medical forms.

No one calls him that anymore.

So for course, he leaves the stack of mail on the kitchen counter and ducks away to his room with the letter addressed to him in his coat pocket.

When he opens it, he chokes on his own saliva.

Because the handwriting on the outside, well it had been indistinct, unnoticeable, normal, didn't stand out in any way.

But this- inside the envelope- is a letter addressed to him and…

And that's his mother's handwriting.

Fuck.

Read it. Read it. Read it. Maybe don't she hasn't reached out before maybe it's- READ IT READ IT fuck her she left you and it's her own- EEEEEEEEEEEE- READ IT

You promised you'd tell Phil of either of them made any cont-

Techno reads it.

Part of him wishes he didn't.

He made the choice after his first visit that he wouldn't see his parents again, at least until he was 18. Part of that was forced- he really wasn't supposed to visit the first time- and part of that is choice.

It's… Techno needed time. And sure maybe seven years seems like a long time but so far it's only been five and…

And well, these things take time.

It's hard trying to connect your caring, loving parents to mass murders and convicted terrorists.

Techno needs time. Five years isn't enough.

Why'd he read the letter?

The second letter comes two weeks later and the voices, the voices get bad again.

Real bad.

Bad as in Techno can't distinguish auditory hallucinations from reality. Bad as in Techno's hearing voices from people he knows again. Bad as in the lastest reoccurring voice is a version of Wilbur- still suicidal- who actually succeeded at his attempts and is now a ghost

Bad as in Techno's not sleeping and he's only eating so Phil doesn't catch on and he's having more meltdowns at school and he's reading every letter his mom sends him and he even sends one back and-

Bad as in suddenly, someday, somehow, Techno is on a train to visit her.

Phil catches him, like Techno knows he will, like he always does. Phil's always had impeccable timing.

Five years isn't enough.

He's not sure seven years will be any better.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter was one of the hardest chapters I've ever written. In a good way. I hope y'all enjoy the angst and as always, things get better.

And we finally have pink haired techno!!

I'm still behind on comments. I will catch up.

~Cool Community Things to Check Out!~

[**Encompass Sandbox Project**](#): The official guide to the Encompass Sandbox Project- a project in which users are encouraged to take inspiration from the encompass series and create their own varying works of fiction from writing, to art, and so much more.

[**encompass: the sandbox**](#): encompass: the sandbox is the official collection for the Encompass Sandbox Project.

[**encompass: behind the scenes**](#): an insider look at everything that goes on in the encompass series. This series will feature Q&A, projects, plans, and other behind the scenes content.

no longer

Chapter Summary

Technoblade grows up and makes some choices. Some of them bigger choices than others. Such is the reality of becoming an adult.

Chapter Notes

CW: tics, auditory hallucinations, suggestions of self-harm/slight gore (auditory hallucinations), overwhelming sensory experience (described in depth), sensory overload, shutdown, discussion of terrorism, discussion of bombing/death/prision, unhealthy family mentions, ethical discussion, trying to figure out boundaries around relationships, ableism/racism/classism (mentioned)

The fire alarm goes off for the first time at the very end of the second week of the fall semester of Techno's college career.

He's literally only lived here three weeks, just beginning his path to get his degree in English, and now the fire alarm is blaring across the dorms.

It's hell. Absolute hell. Techno can't think.

The alarm is blaring and loud and in a fit of desperation Techno yanks off his headphones.

Which is exactly what he didn't want to do.

But he heard the alarm and knew he needed his headphones so he obviously would put them on to help.

But the thing is he was already wearing his headphones. He wears them most of the time.

So instead of putting on headphones to help block the noise because he's already wearing them, he takes them off.

And that makes it so much worse.

As quickly as his fumbling hands can manage, he shoves them back on.

His breathing is already sharp and heavy. The alarms echo in his head and he isn't quite sure if it's just an effect of being more sensitive to the sound or if his hallucinations are pitching in to give him an even harder time.

He stumbles to his feet, balance off and fucked up as he grabs the nearest point to balance himself. It happens to be his chair, but it's a shit chair so he over balances and almost tumbles to the ground.

He narrowly catches himself. The alarm is still blaring.

Floof is trembling on his bed, his paws tucked in close and visibly shaking.

Techno stumbles to his closet to find Floof's carrier, but can't.

He's just barely moved in, he doesn't remember where he put it.

The wrongness of it all is incredibly off putting.

He stands there for a good thirty seconds, trying to process what to do instead.

He needs to evacuate because of the fire alarm. He has to evacuate with Floof with him. He has to have Floof's carrier to put Floof in so Floof can evacuate so he can evacuate. He doesn't have the carrier so he can't evacuate.

It's all wrong.

He stands there for another minute while the alarm is still blaring.

"Techno?" he hears from the other side of the door, "Dude we gotta go. Our RA will have your head if you don't evacuate even though it's probably just someone burning microwave popcorn or something stupid."

Techno's frozen.

He has to evacuate.

Floof's leash! His harness!

He grabs those two items quickly, grabs his dog, and exits his room.

Dream's waiting for him in the living room, watching as Techno stumbles about his room like a mad man. He clips his pup into his harness and attaches the leash before moving to the door.

What else does he need?

Keys.

Where are his keys?

"I have keys," Dream says, "just grab shoes and we can get out of here."

Shoes! Right, how could Techno forget shoes.

"You're kind of really bad at this," young him speaks up, *"Floof would totally die if the fire was serious. He'd die, and it'd be all your fault."*

He grits his teeth at the words, he doesn't have time for this.

He grabs his shoes and they get the hell out of there.

It's mostly all a blur, the tumbling down the stairs as their building evacuates like sardines. All Techno can really think about is the fact that they would all certainly have burned to death if this was an actual fire considering how long it takes them.

The spill out of the building and into the parking lot, groups congealing together and chatting about what's going on.

Techno lowers his head, stays low, and waits for it all to end.

He heads off into the corner, where a bench resides. He tumbles onto it, pulling his knees up to his chest and loosely holding Floof's leash around his wrist.

He rocks, back pressing against the uncomfortable bench.

At least it's grounding.

He squeezes his eyes shut and tries to breathe.

He wants to go home. He wants his dad. This sucks. And he can't even have a meltdown because he has to adult and get back to his dorm whenever this is all over. And he can't really do that if he's having a meltdown.

God this sucks.

Someone sits next to him.

Techno barely avoids growling at them.

"Hey you doing alright?" Dream asks.

Dream? What the fuck is Dream doing here? Why isn't he gathering with his two friends from the floor above theirs? Techno and Dream don't really even talk.

It's not like they dislike each other or hate one another, but they don't really talk or hang out.

"Is there anything I can do?" Dream asks.

Why is he here?

Techno shakes his head and buries it in his knees. Techno catches Dream nodding out of the corner of his eye and he scoots away slightly but stays with Techno.

Techno peaks out from his hidden spot and glares. Why is he here?

Eventually the all clear is called and the students are allowed to clamor back into the building. Techno hangs back preferring to get back last and not get caught up in the crowd. He doesn't want to be around everyone pushing up against each other and chatting loudly.

Dream continues to stay with him, even when Techno sees his two friends pass by on their own way back into the building.

Finally, when the area is clear, Techno gets up to go back inside, picking up Floof to carry him with him. Dream follows him, and silently they return to their dorm.

They get back in and Techno breathes a sigh of relief. Fuck fire alarms. At least it's over.

Twenty minutes later the fire alarm goes off again.

Techno's not embarrassed to say he screams. But he has things to do so he grabs everything he did before and piles Floof into his arms.

Dream's at the door already, holding the door open.

They evacuate, same as before.

Last time- the first time- it was all too much: the sound, the sight of the pressing bodies against his.

This time… this time it is worse.

But worse in that way that instead of Techno feeling everything he feels nothing.

Even after he gets away from the crowd and on the bench, he hears the tumbling of feet continuing. His hallucinations start to blend with his sensory issues in the worst way possible and unfortunately, he can't exactly quiet noises and sounds that are in his own head.

Well he could bash his skull in.

"Yes," the voices cheer, *"whack your head on the sidewalk. Split it open! Blood for the blood god!"*

It takes everything in Techno to tear himself away from those thoughts.

He forgets most of the time spent outside and it's only Dream's gentle urging that gets him back in the building.

He hears a firefighter talking to a security guard. Something about a broken alarm. They don't know how many more times it'll go off.

Techno wilts at the admission. Guess that means he won't be getting any decent rest anytime soon.

Fuck this. Fuck fire alarms. They're stupid.

The third time the fire alarm goes off isn't really a surprise.

Techno doesn't move.

He should, he should leave. It's better outside, quiter, with fewer lights.

But he… he just can't do it. It's too much.

"Uh, Techno," Dream says, "we gotta go. The guard said that we had to fully evacuate each time. You probably don't want to get written up for this shit."

Techno honestly could care less about getting written up. But Dream's words at least get through to him, and once more he evacuates on autopilot. But that's also where he stops.

Because the all clear's called and Techno wants to move. He wants to get up, wants to go back to his dorm. He wants to lay down, go to bed, not have to do any of this ever again.

But he can't move.

And when did he start crying?

Dream's talking to him and Techno knows he is, he hears Dream trying to get his attention, trying to help him but Techno...

Techno can't do anything.

He can't move.

And it's late and it's cold outside and Dream barely knows him and everyone else has left, even the firemen so Techno has to do something but he can't and-

"Call Phil," he gets out, and then returns to his silence.

Dream repeats his words, mumbling, before lighting up.

"Oh! Okay," he says, and he reaches over to gently take Techno's phone off of his lap, swiping up to open.

Using the little remaining energy he has left, Techno picks up his thumb and places it on the device.

It opens, and Dream scrolls to contacts. Techno does his best to relax.

It's hard to.

Everything is just… so so much. Floof is trying to help, pressing his small wet nose into the crook of Techno's elbow.

It helps but it's not enough and Techno still feels like he's drowning, like he's disconnected from reality and can't swim to the surface.

Everything is still so loud, his thoughts worst of all.

At least the voices are finally quiet.

Techno can hear a few in the background, talking about nothing but at least they're not actively bothering him, not like earlier. They are nearly as distracting or demanding his attention.

The phone is ringing, and then being picked up.

"Hey, this is Dream. I'm Techno's roommate."

"Yeah we had a fire alarm and he's pretty unresponsive."

"Uh he has his headphones on I'm not sure he'd be able to hear you."

"Okay yeah."

"Hey Techno?" Dream asks. Techno doesn't have the energy to give a reply.

"Can I connect your phone to your headphones? Phil explained to me if you can't do it yourself."

Oh right. His headphones. Duh.

Techno nods.

"Okay," Dream says, "I'm going to reach up and turn them on, alright?"

Techno nods again, and then Dream's doing exactly just that. He's careful, hands staying on the headphones and near Techno but never actually touching him. Techno appreciates the care. He'd probably go from shutdown to meltdown if Dream touched him.

Shutdowns tend to be more emotionally draining, but at least they're not as physically unpleasant and exhausting as meltdowns are.

Pros and cons.

His headphones turn on and Techno hears the little bluetooth chime letting him know they're on and connected.

Seconds later he hears the crackling of the phone. He doesn't hear Phil, he probably assumes Dream's still working on the headphones.

Techno pulls all his energy together once more and lets out a hum that probably sounds more like a whine.

"Tech?" Phil says.

He whines again.

"Hey bud," Phil says, "rough night, huh?"

Well if that isn't the understatement of the century. He rolls his eyes and huffs, a hint of a smile already starting to crease across his face. How does his dad always manage to do that?

"I'm just gonna ramble if that's alright mate, let me know if you need anything else."

That sounds good to Techno. He loves hearing his dad talk. It's nice. It's home.

He lets Phil talk to him. Eventually, together both Phil's voice and Dream slowly help him get up and actually head inside to the dorms.

He finds himself listening to his father's smooth voice as Techno gently braids his own hair, the repetitive motion soothing and familiar. If he closes his eyes, he almost feels like he's at home.

Dream turns off all the lights except the kitchen light so Techno still has enough to see from where he's in the living room.

Somehow, over time, he falls asleep on the couch.

He wakes up the next morning with a sore neck, a stiff back, and headphones falling off his head.

"Thanks," he tells Dream when he next sees him later that evening, "for last night."

"Of course!" Dream says, "I get it, you know. I mean not exactly 'cause well… but I get the- what's the word- right! Sensory overload and stuff. I have ADHD. And I know how much that sucks. So you're fine dude. Glad I could help."

"Thanks," Techno repeats, because he doesn't know what else to say.

"Of course. You're dad seems pretty cool as well."

Techno lights up at the comment.

Phil is pretty great isn't he?

Techno's lucky to have him in his life.

He remembers his first meltdown with Phil, it had been over his hair and he'd been so scared that Phil wouldn't let it be his.

But Phil proved him wrong and now it's almost as long as it was when he was eleven and it's a bright pink and it's perfect.

And-

And well, whenever something is going well for Techno, life decides to spit in his face.

It starts in class. He survived lower education with only two mentions of his parents, of what they did.

In his newest class they're spending a whole semester on domestic terrorism in the last 30 years.

Look, Techno knew it'd come up. He chose the class himself. He- well he wasn't sure really why he did.

Partly because it interests him, genuinely, the science behind terrorism. The fear mongering, the victim blaming, the impact.

It's an interesting topic.

The other part- the other part of Techno isn't quite ready to face his parents.

He thinks this is the closest he'll get.

The letters last year, the reconnection with his mom, being able to write to her and tell her about his life and hear about hers in turn…

Well it was nice. But it had also been fake, a lie.

They never talked about why she was in prison, why they had to write letters to communicate, why Techno had to clarify which dad he was talking about.

It… Techno isn't ready to face all of that, open that can of worms. He's not sure his parents are either.

Dream takes the class with him. He takes it for the credit and to have a study partner.

Techno doesn't know if having a friend makes the class better or worse.

And… and his parents don't even really come up.

Or they do, they do a few times but the semester is only so long which means that whole section is a part they're not going to be tested on. Techno assumes half the students don't even look at it.

Techno gets halfway through the semester without much happening.

And right before the semester ends, Wilbur drops the bombshell that he's pregnant.

And now Techno's taking this class on terrorism, preparing to become an uncle and reflecting on what it means to be a family.

Wilbur will be a good dad, Techno knows he will.

But so was Techno's dad. And so is Phil. Only one of those worked out for him.

And what if, what if Wilbur ends up the same as his dad? Different circumstances sure but what if Wilbur can't care for his baby? What then?

The voices don't help, picking up on those fears and insecurities of his and reminding him every time they can.

Technoblade knows that feeling of being lost and alone, of isolation so cold you think the furthest poles of the Earth must be warmer.

It's then he swears that if anything ever happens to Wilbur, Techno will take care of his child. Wilbur's kid will not go into the system. Not like Techno did. Not like Wilbur did.

This kid has a family, one big enough that no matter what happens there will always be someone waiting for him.

And then directly after Wilbur announces his pregnancy and shortly before summer break, something in Techno's life starts to feel off.

It doesn't make sense because everything is going so well.

Either way, something about his hair is bugging him. And he doesn't know what, why, or how.

It's small things. It gets in his face a lot no matter how many times he pulls it back and he goes through the conditioner- the good, expensive kind- way too quickly.

But Techno's dealt with the small things all his life.

It's the big things that start to get to him, mostly the feeling of wrongness.

And then one Friday evening Dream comes home with a haircut, way too late for him to have gotten it cut somewhere.

"What happened to your hair?" Techno asks.

"What?" Dream asks with a frown and visibly takes a step back. Techno doesn't know if he's upset or confused. He's always been terrible with emotions like this.

He clarifies his statement.

"Your hair is short, but you couldn't have gotten it cut somewhere."

"Oh Sapnap and George did it," Dream says, "it's kind of a tradition with Sapnap and me every month or so, and George joined in this time."

"Can I join next time?" Techno instantly asks.

Sometimes he hates his ADHD and the impulsivity that comes with it.

But sometimes, sometimes he loves it.

This is one of those times.

"Uh sure," Dream says, "that'd be cool. We don't really have good scissors though, our hair is all short so a lot of it is with clippers."

"That's okay," Techno says, "I want it short anyways."

"Okay," Dream says, "sounds cool. I'll let you know when we cut our hair next."

Techno's shoulders fall in some relaxation of pent up apprehension. Dream doesn't ask him why he wants to cut his hair or challenge it all. He just… says okay.

Something in Techno appreciates it. Something in Techno appreciates the casual approach Dream has with hair, how opposite it is to Techno's own relationship with his.

A month later he gets a text.

Dream: *headed dover to saps dorm. probably gonna cut hair later. Wanna join?*

Techno: *yes*

Less than half an hour later Techno's sitting in a chair clutching Dream's hand for dear life.

"If you don't want to do this, say the word," Dream encourages.

"Cut it all."

Techno can feel Dream shrug behind him.

"You're the boss.*

The first snip rings out loudly across Sapnap's tiny dorm bathroom.

Out of the corner of his eye, Techno sees a giant chunk- over a foot and a half long- of bright pink hair tumble to the floor.

He closes his eyes as the next snip rings out.

When it's all over, cutting and then buzzing and then evening it all out, Techno gets shakily to his feet and to the nearest mirror.

What stares back at him is… him. But it doesn't look like him. Short hair and only some of it is pink, the bits on the side clearly showing his natural brown and isn't that strange?

There's a small fluff on top, mostly even, and the sides are a short, cropped buzz.

Fascinated, Techno reaches up to touch them.

The hair pokes his fingers, tickles in a bristly firm way and Techno jerks his hand back in surprise.

A second later, he's rubbing it right again, the prickly hairs an interesting new texture on his hands.

In fact, it feels incredibly familiar, like something he used to know, used to feel. He has this weird warped sense of deja vu but he's almost certain that this really is a memory.

But he's never had short hair like this before, when it first was cut it had felt so wrong, nothing like this so it couldn't be that. And even his dad's wasn't ever that short so how does he remember-

His dad's beard, cropped and short with bristly hairs that'd he brush against Techno's cheeks just to make him smile.

Techno's hand stills on his hair.

Oh. That's what it is.

He looks back at the mirror, meets his own eyes, and gives the tiniest of nods.

New hair. New him.

He likes it.

He doesn't think about his hair being short until Phil brings it up.

Phil drops it quickly in the car and Techno's still a bit anxious about it, but mostly reassured.

Techno will miss Phil braiding his hair, will miss the connection they had with his long hair.

But they can make new connections through his short hair.

And sure enough, they do. Plus Phil is a bit better at trimming his hair properly then Dream is, which is nice.

So he wears it short and continues to dye it pink.

Summer break is nice, and the time off means that Phil and him can learn to manage his new hair together.

And then once more, he's back to college.

He's still in the dorms this year, but instead of getting a random roommate placement, he's requested to room with Dream.

The two of them got along well last year, so they decided to go for round two. And barely two months into the year, Dream brings in their mail.

In the small pile of mail is a letter from Techno's mom, because when could his life ever be simple?

Techno blinks at the notice, tracing the letters.

Turns out the years went a lot faster than he expected.

"Oh," he says to himself, "okay then."

Dream reenters the room.

"Oh what?" he asks, passing by him on his way to the kitchen.

At first, he assumes the voice is a hallucination, but when he sees Dream physically pass him, he answers.

"Got a letter from my mom," Techno explains.

Dream frowns, "like your biological mother? I didn't know she was around."

"She's not- she wasn't- she couldn't be," Techno stumbles to explain.

But now, well it's not like she can just go anywhere but she has more freedom then she's had in close to a decade.

"Ah," Dream says, "makes sense."

"Hmm."

"Okay actually no that doesn't make sense at all because I cannot relate to that even a little bit, but like it's valid and your experience with your mom is valid and… yeah."

"Yeah," Techno agrees.

"Yeah," Dream echoes.

They spend the next few minutes echoing yeahs back, vocal stimming together.

"I'm not going to write her back," Techno says.

"Why not?" the voices chime, *"write her. Write her. Pick up the pen, write her a letter and then maybe stab yourself with the pen. Oh! You could write the letter with your own blood."*

Techno's mother wants to meet again, hear from, but this time they aren't separated by walls and fences and laws.

Technoblade could go to her if he wanted to.

It would be easy.

"You're not?"

It's a question, Techno can tell it is. It's so obviously a question. But it's not a judgement. Techno can tell. When Dream judges, his eyes get all fired and he's fierce, hot like a flame.

When he's curious he'll look at t Techno and tilt his head slightly like a dog eager for a walk would.

"Yeah," Techno decides. "I'm not ready yet."

Dream nods.

"That's okay," he validates.

"Yeah," Techno says, "yeah it is."

He wants to talk to his mom, his dad, to have a relationship with them.

But…

But he's not ready. He's not ready now, and maybe he won't ever be.

He'll cross that bridge when he comes to it.

He tells Phil. He doesn't need to, but he wants to, and he feels like he should, so he does.

Phil tells him he loves him and that he's proud.

Techno frowns a bit, because Techno knows Phil's thoughts about Techno's parents are similarly complicated.

"I meant," Phil continues to elaborate, "that I'm proud of making the best decision you could for yourself. Even if it might be a hard one. I'm proud of that, I'm proud of you. I hope you're just as proud of yourself."

Techno smiles, stupid and dopey like he did when he was a child.

He doesn't have the words to share his gratitude and love with Phil so he flaps his hands and tells Phil he loves him through his stimming.

Techno makes his decision, and he sticks by it. Life isn't easy, or simple, but it's good and he continues to enjoy his classes.

He falls back into routine, the letter from his mom gathering dust and feeling content in his decision.

Soon enough, he's getting a call from Phil letting him know that Ranboo's going back to Niki.

Good. It's what's best for him.

Techno will miss him though. After their first meeting, he's kept in touch with Ranboo. They're trading texts back and forth and occasional calls.

He's not quite a brother, not quite a friend. But he's something to Techno and that's important.

He goes home to send him off.

It's a nice send off, a nice 'see you around.' Plus, it allows Techno to catch up with his dad and brothers.

Tommy's certainly not the first person to ask him about the color, but he's the first Techno replies honestly too.

"We did it back when I was just starting to really get my auditory hallucinations under control," he admits, "I struggled a lot with the voice of my younger self, and did it to spite him."

Tommy blinks at him.

"So you dyed your hair to spite yourself."

"Yeah."

"Got it. You're kind of a dumbass."

"Thanks Tommy,"

"Will you dye my hair?"

"What color?"

"Red."

Tommy ends up chickening out the longer they discuss it as Techno goes over the care, routine, process, and permanency. To be completely honest, Techno goes overboard on the warnings on purpose.

He wants to give Tommy the choice, but he also really doesn't just want Tommy doing it because he wants to be like him. That's just dumb, and will probably have him ending up with hair he regrets.

And Techno knows how important hair is.

They put it off until Christmas break, but by then Tommy is insistent.

They don't dye all of Tommy's hair red. Instead, they just do a streak right at front where it's light enough they don't even need to bleach it. It comes out surprisingly well. Tommy's blonde, sure, but dirty blonde at best.

Even still the color comes out bright and vivid.

"Cool," Tommy says.

Not even two days later he comes back with a request.

"Ranboo wants- hey POG- wants you to dye his hair too when he comes- HA CUM- down for this weekend."

"Have him tell me himself, child."

"Jerk."

"Butt."

"Ass."

"I'm trying to study here."

"Sure you are. I can see the tab about pumpkin parasites- hey- right there."

Techno clicks exit on the tab immediately.

"You saw nothing."

They start with purple for Ranboo.

He's more sure that he wants his hair dyed then Tommy is, but way less dedicated.

"Are you sure?" Techno tries asking.

"I'm sure," Ranboo commits, "I want to do this. I just- well I mean it could turn out really bad."

Techno stops, hand holding brush just inches away from Ranboo's hair.

"You make me so concerned," he sighs.

Ranboo laughs.

He then looks up, spots the brush, and sits up. His hair gently knocks into, the bleach gently spreading onto the places he's touched. It makes a sizzling noise, and Techno almost jerks back in horror until he realizes that the sizzling is coming from his own mind. Ranboo's fine, it's just a little bit of bleach.

"No going back now," Ranboo insists.

Techno cracks a smile and gets to work.

"When did you first dye your hair?" Ranboo asks.

"I was in middle school," Techno answers.

Ranboo hums.

"It's always been a thing with you, your hair. It's cool. I-" Ranboo shrugs, "It's important to you. I've never asked."

Usually when a neurotypical person says something like that, Techno takes it for what it is, a statement. But with Ranboo, with a fellow autie, Techno recognizes the question.

"My parents always treated my hair like it was incredibly important," he says. I fell into the same habit. And it is very important to me."

"Tommy says it used to be long. And I mean, I've seen the pictures."

"When I first got placed in the system, it was cut very short without my consent. It- I had just lost my parents. And then they took my hair."

There's silence for a minute.

"That's awful," Ranboo says. His voice is shaky. Techno knows that if anybody will get it, it'll be him.

Techno nods.

"Uh yeah," he agrees, "Yeah it was."

"You know, uh," Ranboo says, "My parents are still alive too."

"Yeah?"

Techno doesn't quite know where this conversation is going, but the importance of it is clear in Ranboos voice. It's a casual phrasing but how he forces the words out shows that it's anything but.

"Mhmm," Ranboo agrees. "Uh, so why haven't you met up with your parents?"

"Because," Techno says, "Because, because they were good parents, sure. But… well. What if Tubbo suddenly became super ableist and determined that autism needed a cure?"

Ranboo pauses.

"I'd be hurt."

"RIght, yeah," Techno agrees. "And could you be friends with him?"

Ranboo pauses to think about it. Techno continues working on bleaching the other's hair

"... Probably not," Ranboo admits, "Because I mean- fundamentally that's wrong."

"Okay now what if it wasn't autism. Maybe it's about something that doesn't affect you personally. Maybe he's incredibly racist or classist. Could you be friends then?"

"I- no? Because it doesn't change the fundamental issues of- Techno where are you going with this?"

Techno chokes back the years of pain that come with this very topic.

"Fundamentally- fundamentally I cannot support my parents. What they did, why they did it. Yes, yes they were good parents, But I can't- I'm not okay having a relationship with them

when fundamentally I cannot support them. They um, their choices mean I can't- they can't be in my life anymore," he explains.

He had made that decision a long time ago. It's still one he stands by, one he's determined to hold himself too. That doesn't make it any easier.

"Same," Ranboo says.

"Hmm?" Techno asks.

"I uh- my parents don't get to have a relationship with me anymore."

"But you still have a family," Techno reminds him.

"So do you," Ranboo agrees.

Yeah, so he does.

There are so many kids that don't have what Techno has, so many kids that never get the family that he got to have.

And that is why Techno changes his major.

It's his third year and he's steady on his English track, so he has to meet in front of a board to get the approval to switch it this late into his education.

He's supposed to provide proof of dedication and that he can get it done and that he has future plans, all that shit.

He also has to give a short speech.

So that's exactly what he does.

"When I was ten years old," Technoblade begins, "my parents were arrested for domestic terrorism. By eleven, I had gone through two groups homes and ended up in a temporary placement. By twelve the foster system removed me from that home, ignoring that it was the best, safest place for me. By thirteen, I was adopted from the home they took me from.

"As a kid in the foster system, you quickly learn that your voice doesn't matter. Foster care is outdated, and in almost every scenario kids' thoughts and wants are ignored over what adults think is best. Foster care is a broken system, and that's why I want to change it from the inside out.

"One man in foster care saved my life. If I can do the same for even one child… that, that is worth it."

He's not even misty-eyed after his speech.

Okay maybe just a little.

But hey, he gets approved so what's there to complain about?

From there on then, Techno gets on track to get his degree in social work.

One kid, he tells himself, even one kid makes a difference.

After all, it did for him.

Chapter End Notes

This ending of this chpater fills me with pride. Ii hope it makes you glow.

Chronic illness is being a Bitch so I'll have an even looser update schedule than usual. Expect 8-14 days for the final chapter. Also, pls don't wish me 'get wells' or 'take your time' or anything along those lines unless you're also chronically ill and/or know me personally. thanks! /nm

As we come to the end of this fic, we shall slowly introduce the next;

Up Next: Wilbur's fic. More details coming soon :D

~Cool Community Things to Check Out!~

Encompass Sandbox Project: The official guide to the Encompass Sandbox Project- a project in which users are encouraged to take inspiration from the encompass series and create their own varying works of fiction from writing, to art, and so much more.

encompass: the sandbox: encompass: the sandbox is the official collection for the Encompass Sandbox Project.

encompass: behind the scenes: an insider look at everything that goes on in the encompass series. This series will feature Q&A, projects, plans, and other behind the scenes content.

forever and always

Chapter Summary

Technoblade's parents love him. Forever and always.

Unfortunately, that love isn't quite enough.

Chapter Notes

CW: ableism, unconsentual body modification, bullying, meltdown, bad sensory experiences, police, holds/restraining

"Hey sleepy head," a voice whispers to him, "time to get up buddy. Don't want to miss the sunrise, now do we?"

Technoblade springs up, sitting fully upright in his small, child sized bed to stare into his father's warm eyes.

He lets out a squeal of delight, clapping his hands together. It's their morning routine- his dad and his- but it never fails to make him excited. The sunrise is just so beautiful. He flaps his hands at his side and begins to rock.

"Want to get dressed now, or later?" his dad asks.

His PJs are warm and more fun to cuddle in, so he wants to keep those for now.

He looks at his bedside table for his tablet to communicate that, but it's not there.

He frowns at the realization.

"Leh, Lah, Lah," he gets out, because that's all he can do without it.

He gets a nod in response.

"Sounds like a plan."

Technoblade smiles. He wants to tell his dad he's ready now and that he wants to go to the big window, but he can't because his tablet isn't here.

He frowns again, then pulls at his dad's hand.

"Yeah, T?" he asks.

Technoblade taps his bed stand table next to him and signs 'where' with his free hand.

He knows some sign, it's one of the many options his parents have given to him for communication, but he's not super fond of it. Some of the movements are hard for his hands, and then he gets frustrated. He likes his tablet better, but sign language is certainly better than talking.

"I think you left it in the living room last night," his dad says, "we can check there first, then the big window, yeah?"

Technoblade smiles once more; his dad knows him so well.

"Okay munchkin, let's go!"

Technoblade squeals in delight again and leaps from his bed, flapping his hands even more.

They head to his door, his father opening it gently so as to not break the early morning atmosphere.

Together they walk down the hall. They tiptoe past where Technoblade's mom is still sleeping, giggling and shushing one another the entire time. It's more out of habit, then any actual concern, because Technoblade's mom has always been an incredibly heavy sleepier.

Plus their tiptoeing really isn't effective with all the shushes and giggles.

They get to the living room in no time and Technoblade quickly spots his tablet charging on one of the small tables.

He quickly unplugs it and opens it up, selecting his AAC app.

He searches through it quickly, incredibly familiar with it's navigation and it's set up. He had been the one to make the categories after all.

Okay well his parents had helped a little.

He presses the button he was looking for before quickly pressing the next, and then the speech button.

"Good morning, Daddy" the tablet- Technoblade's voice- says.

"Morning sweetheart," his dad says, his smile lighting up the room.

Technoblade's pretty sure his dad's smile is brighter than the sunrise they're about to watch.

They make their way to the large window not too soon after, curling up against each other as the sun rises.

"I love you," his dad says, and his words vibrate through Technoblade, rumbling against his chest pleasantly. "Forever and always."

"Forever and always," Technoblade parrots through his tablet.

Forever and always.

Together they watch the sun rise.

A good half hour after it's fully up and Technoblade's mom has finally woken up- heading into the kitchen to get breakfast started- Technoblade's dad speaks again.

"I actually have a small gift for you," he says, "but first let's head to the kitchen to help your mom out with breakfast, sound good?"

Technoblade nods eagerly, and together they move to the room.

His mom's face lights up the moment they enter.

"Morning sweetheart," she greets him, "are kisses okay right now?"

Technoblade considers it. He's not sure he really wants to deal with the sliminess right now.

"No," he presses on his tablet, "I'll set the table."

"Sounds good," she says.

He moves to the counter to grab the plates his mom has already set out. Behind him, his parents have their own mini conversation.

"And morning to you too," his mom greets his dad.

"Oh so I'm second place in this family?"

Technoblade isn't good at tone, but he knows his dad's joking because his family talks a lot about how much they love each and every member.

"Yes," his mom hums, going along with the joke. Technoblade snorts as he grabs the plates, because it's funny. His parents are really silly sometimes.

"The dog comes first," his mom solemnly promises.

His dad laughs loudly, and Technoblade frowns, trying to figure out his mom's words.

They don't have a dog, so how could the dog come fir-

Oh! Oh Technoblade gets it. The dog comes first because they don't have one which means Technoblade mom really doesn't care about his dad or him (which is a joke because obviously she loves them).

Oh that is really funny! Technoblade wants to participate in this joke.

"Hey!" he protests, "Mean."

He's smiling wildly and hopes his parents know that he's joking. They also give him smiles, so he's pretty sure he's good.

And then his mom and dad kiss which is gross and has Technoblade scrunching up his nose as he looks away.

Yuck.

They eat breakfast together and just as they finish up, Technoblade remembers the conversation he had with his dad earlier.

"Dad," he says through his tablet, "can I have my surprise please?"

"Oh right!" he says, jumping up from his seat, "yes of course, I'll be right back."

He returns a minute later with a small paper bag- it's top folded over to keep it closed. He slides it over to Technoblade.

"I saw these the other day," he says, "thought you would like them."

Technoblade grins, because really that's so like his dad to be thoughtful. He opens the bag.

Inside is a sheet of thicker, papery material. All along the sides are little barrettes in all colors of the rainbow, maybe about twenty of them.

Technoblade shrieks at the sight. There's so many fun colors! He loves them.

"Your hair is getting long," his dad says, "and if you want it out of your face or if you just want something fun to put in it, you can have these.

Techno shrieks in delight once more and flaps his hands. Next, he taps the same button on his tablet five times.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you," he says.

He loves it, he loves them, he loves his parents, and he loves his hair.

He is always going to have long hair. Always.

And with long hair comes caring for long hair, which happens to be the trickier part. Technoblade's mostly good at bathing himself now, cause he's a big boy.

But it's still hard sometimes especially on bad sensory days and washing his hair can be even harder.

So his dad helps him.

He sings as he rinses Technoblade's hair out, before lathering it in thick suds of soap. They're doing it in the sink because Technoblade hates spending a long time in the shower. It's too

wet.

The shower's still running though, because his mom is bathing. She catches his eyes on her and sticks her tongue out at him as she scrubs at her own hair.

The water pours down around her and some soap gets in her mouth. Immediately she makes a face and spits some of it out, spluttering.

Technoblade can't help but giggle, prompting his dad to look over at his wife in turn. He also laughs at the sight and Technoblade's mom frowns at them both. Technoblade can tell she's teasing though, because she has that sparkle in her eye that means that she's happy.

She turns her back to them in a stance of resistance and through giggle fits, Technoblade and his dad return to their own task.

His dad hums through a wide variety of music, from classical to classic rock. Technoblade snaps and flaps and bounces his feet to it all.

Instead of telling him to still, Technoblade's dad just moves with him, adapting to his son's stimming as he washes Technoblade's hair.

He uses a special soap that Technoblade had picked out recently, one that doesn't smell too strong or strange. Most importantly, it feels nice on his hair.

Gosh, having long hair is so exciting!

The only thing is that it tends to get in his face.

He's trying to do homework, head down as he focuses on his math, rocking absentmindedly as he rolls his pencil in his hands.

His hair falls in his face, ticking against his nose and making him scrunch it up in irritation.

He shoves the lock behind his ear and keeps staring at his math worksheet.

But his hair keeps falling, small strands tickling at his face and it's so distracting! He can't focus on his homework long enough to do even a single problem.

Even when it isn't falling into his face it's still right at the corner of his vision, and the air currents always brush against it just enough to shake it and Technbloade keeps getting distracted by it and he can't focus on his school work.

He screeches in frustration as his hair distracts him once again, just as he was about to finish the first problem on his worksheet.

"Woah!" his mom says, "munchkin, what's wrong?"

Technblade screeches again, fists tightening. He doesn't know how to explain his frustration with his situation.

He grabs his hair with his fists and then pulls it back, getting it all out of his face and pushing every strand away from him. The texture grates on his hands and he quickly gives up, letting go and flapping his hands to get rid of the bad feeling.

He continues to screech.

"Oh munchkin," his mom says, "okay hun, let's try to figure this out. What's wrong?

His hair! His hair is wrong! Technoblade loves it, but it keeps getting on his face and he hates it!

He unlocks his tablet, quickly opening his speech app and finding a familiar word

"Hair, hair, hair."

"Is it getting in your face?" His mom asks.

Techno nods swiftly.

"Okay, is it alright if I put it up in a braid, it'll get out of your face that way, and it'll be tighter and better then a ponytail."

Technoblade nods again.

"Alright, I just need to grab a few things. Are you okay to wait here for a moment?"

"Yes."

His mom smiles at him, nods, and then ducks out of the room. She returns quickly, hairbrush, comb, spray, and hairbands in her hands.

Once he gives consent for her to touch him, she goes in, carefully pulling back hair and sectioning it off.

Techno has trouble sitting still at first, so focused on her actions and wanting to see everything she does. Something that's hard to do when her hands are out of his line of sight.

But his mom encourages him that he can look at it when it's done, and that maybe he could try to do his math homework again.

Techno frowns, but complies, and tries to do his math homework as she works.

His mom's hands are distracting at first, but the pull against his hair is soothing and it becomes familiar, predictable, especially compared to the sudden movement of flyaway hair.

He gets through one math problem, and then the next, and the next.

"There we go," his mom eventually announces. She takes a step back and smiles down at techno.

"All done, you want to see?"

Technoblade nods eagerly and she leads him to the bathroom before going to find a mirror so he can see the back of his head.

Technoblade marvels at the braid, at the work of art his mom created.

"I love it," he announces, "thank you mommy."

"Course honey. And when you're a bit older, I can even teach you to do it yourself."

Technoblade gasps in delight and lets out a loud squeal. He clings to his mom, pulling her close, and she wraps her whole self around him, squeezing him right in all the right ways.

He loves his long hair.

But not everyone else does.

"Technoblade looks like a girl!" one of his classmates shouts, "look at him, he's got long hair and he looks like a girl."

Technoblade frowns. He doesn't understand.

"I'm a boy though."

"Well you don't look like a boy! You've got long hair like a dumb girl!"

"Hey! I'm not dumb! And I'm not a girl! And girls are dumb!"

"Then why do you have long hair like one? I bet your parents wanted a girl and they ended up with you and didn't like having a boy so they're making you a girl! Your parents don't love you because you're a boy!"

That doesn't even make sense! Technoblade doesn't get it. He doesn't like the other kid.

But he's lost his words at this point, and the other kids act like his tablet isn't his actual words.

He has more verbal words these days. He likes them. He knows he doesn't have to speak, and he still doesn't a lot. But he really really likes how it sounds when he can.

Sometimes he just can't.

His parents say it's up to him. If he wants to speak, if he doesn't want to, if he can, if he can't- no matter what they're okay with it.

His teachers love that he's talking more, and they say things about progress and speech development and Technoblade's kind of sick of seeing their faces light up when he says things verbally,

They get proud of him for using his voice.

Technoblade usually then says his tablet is his voice too. They frown, and say that's not that they meant. Technoblade still doesn't know what they did mean.

Or he does know, he just doesn't agree with them. His tablet is as much his voice as his verbal words.

But that's not the point.

The point is a boy in his class is being mean and he can't talk now but he also doesn't really care because he knows his parents do love him, and he walks away.

He tells his parents later.

"I was upset," he explains, "not because he said that I looked like a girl or that you don't love me because I'm a boy. I was upset because he's wrong but he doesn't know he's wrong. And it's really frustrating when people don't know they're wrong."

"Why's that?" His father asks, gently pushing.

Technoblade frowns, and tries to think of an answer.

"Well… well because they can't learn if they don't know they're wrong. And it's important to learn. You can't do better without learning."

His parents nod.

"That makes sense," his mom says, "I'm sorry the boy didn't listen. That does sound very frustrating."

Techno nods in agreement.

His parents speak to his teacher about the incident. It helps for a few days, but really not much changes. Most people are fine with Technoblade having long hair, but there's always the odd few that take an issue to it.

His parents encourage him to stand up for himself, but more often than not, Technoblade just let's the teasing happen. It's hard sometimes when he's not sure if he's being teased or not.

Like one time someone from the other class told Technoblade to meet him at the corner table so they could eat lunch together, but he had never shown up. Technoblade had been worried. He'd said he'd be there, but he wasn't. What had stopped him?

But turns out the kid had really not gone on purpose. He'd set it up so Technoblade would sit alone.

There's jokes like that, teasing and being made fun of that Technoblade always falls for. He never quite understands that.

It's frustrating, and unfair, and Technoblade's parents teach him that it's ableist.

"What's that word mean?" Technoblade asks.

"Being ableist is when someone discriminates against disabled people."

Technoblade frowns, "how were they doing that?"

"Well, the kids know your disability makes it hard for you to realize when people are joking. So they use that to their advantage to make fun of you. And that's why it's ableist, because they're taking advantage of you through your disability."

Technoblade frowns.

He doesn't like that. That's not fair.

He loves being autistic, of having his flappy hands and sunrises with his dad and the feeling of his long hair.

But he really, really hates ableism. And after he gets a word for the behavior, he sees it happening a lot more often.

It happens a lot at school, a lot with his classmates. People don't want to hang out with him because he's weird and doesn't talk. Parents don't want their kids interacting with him because they're afraid their kids will catch what he has.

But those are manageable. The tricky part is when teachers get involved.

"Your hair is getting really long, isn't it Technoblade?" His teacher mentions one day.

Technoblade nods. It's so great, it's been getting so long.

"Don't you think it's time to get a haircut?" she says.

Technblodae pulls out his tablet.

"No thanks. I like it long."

"Oh I know kids with autism don't like getting their haircut," his teacher says, "but it's important to challenge yourself."

Technoblade frowns. There's so many things wrong with her sentence. First of all, he's an autistic person, not a person with autism. Second, it's a bad assumption to make that autistic people don't like getting their haircut. It does have some truth considering that autistic people commonly are upset by change and haircuts can be an unfamiliar and uncomfortable sensory experience, but how she makes the assumptions seems to be an overgeneralized stereotype.

Something about it doesn't make Technoblade feel good.

And finally, no, it's not important to challenge himself.

Or well, it's important to challenge himself with some things, but he shouldn't have to push himself into anything too much. If it was an unwelcome sensory experience or a haircut he doesn't want because he likes his hair long, then no, he definitely does not have to 'challenge himself.'

End of story.

"No," he states verbally. He even does it verbally because maybe then she'll take it more seriously.

The frustrating thing about talking, is that outside of his family people always tend to take him more seriously when he speaks out loud.

It's one of the reasons he's started talking more. His parents say people should respect his voice, whether verbal or trough his tablet. But that's unfortunately not the reality and Technoblade likes being heard.

So more and more verbal he becomes.

His teacher scoffs and oh right, she was talking to him. Technoblade kind of forgot. He got distracted thinking about talking stuff.

Whatever.

Later that same day, his teacher calls him over.

"Hey Technoblade," she says, "I have a book for you to read."

She holds out a chapter book, one of the ones Technoblade is still working on. He takes it, a little bit lost. It's free choice time, why is she telling him to read something?

"We just need to do a small reading practice, and then you can go back to what you were doing," she encourages.

Okay. Those happen sometimes. Technoblade's okay with that.

But instead of sitting next to him like she usually does, she sits behind him.

He turns, twisting to look at her.

"What?" he says with a frown.

"Turn back around," she chides, "c'mon, let's do the reading practices."

It's odd, and more than a bit weird. Techno continues to frown, but opens the book anyways to find the first page.

He begins to read out loud and he's on the fourth page when he hears a loud snip and a slight tug on his hair.

Instantly, he lurches to his feet, turning quickly to face his teacher. And there, in her hands, is a pair of scissors and a lock of his brown hair.

His own hand flies up to touch his hair, pulling it in front of his face to inspect it and he quickly finds a large chunk with a good few inches missing.

His- his teacher just cut part of his hair off! She took a solid chunk of his! Without consent! She tricked Technoblade into letting her.

His hair is missing. It's gone. It's ruined.

Technoblade screams.

He screams and he doesn't stop screaming. He pulls at his hair and he knocks over the desk closest to him and he curls into a ball and he wacks the floor and he cries and the entire time he continues to scream.

He doesn't notice the teacher call the office, doesn't notice all the kids evacuate the class, doesn't notice the nurse trying to pull him off the ground or the special education teachers trying to pin his arms to his side and behave.

He doesn't notice anything besides his screaming.

Or anything except a familiar voice.

Hey, hey Technoblade," his mom says, "You're going to be okay, Momma's got you."

He still screams, but he also tumbles into her arms and let's her hold him close.

Everything's still wrong, but at least it's a little better.

Once he comes down from the meltdown and the subject of what actually happened is breached, his parents immediately pull him from the school.

He transfers to the other elementary school briefly, but both his parents take leaves from their work to take special classes so they can teach him at home.

When they can, they try to take him on field trips. All three of them quickly find out that Technoblade learns better that way. It's hard for him to sit still for a long time, and grasping concepts without physical examples can be hard for him.

So when they can, they go on field trips to learn.

One weekend his parents take him on a short hike, stopping every few meters to pick up stones and look at leaves and discuss biology. Technoblade's not supposed to take anything living from the trip, because that can be bad for environment.

"Is it okay if I take a rock?" Technoblade, "That's not alive so it shouldn't mess up the habitat, right? And no bugs or animals are using it as a home."

"Yes, that's fine," his dad confirms, and his mom gives a small nod.

Technoblade squeals and flaps his hand, holding the rock he had found close to him. It's a strange rock for the area. It's not dusty like a lot of the other ones, most likely because it had been protected under a tree root. It's a light brown with darker streaks and smooth to the touch.

It's the best rock ever.

"I love it," he announces, "thank you!"

He learns so much that day. He learns about the food chain and about the different types of trees and the Earth's crust and how squirrels store their food during winter.

He's lucky to have parents who can spend so much time with him. A lot of kids don't get their parents all to themselves like he does.

His parents don't work in an office like lots of kids' parents do. His parents- well his parents…

What do his parents do?

He occasionally hears them talk about books and psychology and maps and science and history but that doesn't really explain anything.

"Mom," Technoblade asks, "what do you and Daddy do?"

She smooths his hair down.

"We help people honey, people that are hurting and don't have good loves."

Technoblade nods.

"Okay, but-"

"Are you ready to learn how to braid your hair?"

Technoblade immediately abandons the subject and nods eagerly.

"Okay baby, come here. You can practice on me first."

His mom spends the next two hours teaching him, showing him how to part the hair properly and how to make sure a braid stays tight without being two tight. She teaches him what to do with flyaways and when to use product and what Technoblade can do if product is a bad texture for him.

She spends another hour after that just letting Technoblade practice on her, weaving strands over and under again and again until he perfects it.

When his dad comes home that day, Technoblade's still going strong, practicing his braiding and slowly pulling his mother's hair back. His own hair has also been done by himself. It's not as neat as how far he's gotten with his mom's, but that's chalked up to not having as much experience practicing on himself yet.

But that's how Technoblade's father finds his wife and child, with Technoblade braiding his mother's hair.

"And how are my two favorite people in the world?" he asks.

"Dad!" Technoblade shouts. He abandons the braid, and races over to him, tackling him in a bear hug. His mom follows after.

"Hey munchkin!" His dad laughs, picking him up and hugging him close before setting him back down when he starts to squirm.

"Love you dad!" Technoblade says.

"Love you too kiddo."

"I love you mom," Technoblade pitches in. He doesn't want her to feel forgotten after all.

"Love you sweetheart."

"Forever and always?" Technoblade checks.

"Forever," his mom promises.

"Always," his father promises.

Forever and always.

His parents had left him alone today. Not for long, they never did. Just for part of the afternoon. If they were going to be gone for anymore than a few hours, they would always get someone to watch him. Usually he'd go over to their neighbors or one of his mom and dad's friends would watch him.

But his parents had to pick something up from the office and it wasn't going to be long. Technoblade wasn't allowed to go with them, so they left him at home.

Technoblade's bored, so he reads a book. Books are the best, he loves all the imaginary worlds. He also loves reading about places. His parents had gotten him a set of nonfiction books when his interest in the world had peaked. And he has tons of mythology books, one of his strongest special interests.

He's reading about Theseus when there's a knock at the front door.

Technoblade freezes. His parents had keys, why would someone knock? Who was there?

He didn't know what to do. He tries peeking out the window, and quickly sees a group of three men. One pulls up a radio and speaks into it before whipping his head toward the window.

Technoblade gasps and ducks down out of sight.

What are those people doing here? Why aren't his parents home?

He begins to rock, hoping that'll help with all the ickiness he's feeling.

There's another knock, and then another.

And then they're gone.

Technoblde sighs in relief.

But just a few moments later they return, the neighbor that sometimes babysits Technoblade in tow.

She hands something over. A key, he realizes. His key. Technoblade's house key.

And the strange men stick the key into his door and twist.

"Hello," the first calls as the door creaks open, "Technoblade, my name is Jacob Oliver's, I'm with the police department. I need to speak to you about your parents."

Technoblade's eyes widen and he scurries out from underneath the window.

"What?" he gasps, "where are they, are they okay?"

The policeman frowns, and in his heart, Technoblade knows he's not going to like the answer he's about to receive.

"Oh," he says, "oh."

And that's when everything changes.

His parents will love him, forever and always, just like they promised.

Unfortunately in his case, forever and always isn't quite enough.

Chapter End Notes

Last chapter. There we go.

I think a lot of me expected to continue to carry on Technoblade's story of where I ended off last chapter. But I felt it much more important to explore his roots.

As always, I'll be taking a two week break before the next fic goes up, and I'll give a bit more of a sneak peek into what it'll be.

Wilbur's Fic
Title: my body, me, and all the people inbetween
featuring:
-wilburs relationship with his body
-wilburs relationship with the three familiess he has been a part of
-baby fundy

-a big reveal
cant wait to see you all there ;)

~Cool Community Things to Check Out!~

Encompass Sandbox Project: The official guide to the Encompass Sandbox Project- a project in which users are encouraged to take inspiration from the encompass series and create their own varying works of fiction from writing, to art, and so much more.

encompass: the sandbox: encompass: the sandbox is the official collection for the Encompass Sandbox Project.

encompass: behind the scenes: an insider look at everything that goes on in the encompass series. This series will feature Q&A, projects, plans, and other behind the scenes content.

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